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ECUMENISM

CATHOLIC-ORTHODOX RELATIONS IN THE CCEO

Dr. Pablo Gefaell

THE PRAXIS OF *COMMUNICATIO IN SACRIS*
IN THE CHURCHES IN KERALA, INDIA

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Explanations and Interpretations in the Light of Lumen Gentium

Dr. Thomas Puthukulangara

News

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Editorial

The search for Christian unity was one of the principal concerns of the Second Vatican Council and during this council the Catholic Church solemnly pledged itself to work for this unity. In this context it is also worth mentioning that the year 2012 marks the 50th anniversary of the opening session of this historic ecumenical council. The teaching of the Church on ecumenism, as well as the encouragement to hope and the invitation to love find their official expression mainly in the documents of the Second Vatican Council and especially in *Lumen Gentium* and *Unitatis Redintegratio*. The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity which made a study in 2004 shows that in every part of the world the Council decree on Ecumenism has introduced a radical improvement in Catholic attitudes towards other Christians; the polemical approach of the past is no longer dominant.

The Ecumenical Directory, called for during the Council and published in two parts, one in 1967 and the other in 1970, has given a most valuable service in directing, coordinating and developing the ecumenical effort. Besides the publication of the Directory, numerous other documents that have a bearing on ecumenism have been published by competent ecclesiastical authorities which helped very much to build on the theological, spiritual and pastoral principles

stated in the conciliar documents. They have explored more fully some topics indicated in the documents of the council, developed theological terminology and provided more detailed norms of action, all based, however, on the teaching of the Council itself. The promulgation of the revised Code of Canon Law for the Latin Church in 1983 and of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches in 1990 has created in ecumenical matters a disciplinary situation for the faithful of the Catholic Church. Similarly "The Catechism of the Catholic Church" published in 1992, includes the ecumenical dimension as part of the basic teaching for all the faithful of the Church.

This issue of Christian Orient mainly concentrating on Ecumenism contains two articles which are very relevant in the multi ecclesial situation of India, particularly in the context of Kerala where the Christian Faith is actively practiced.

The author of the first article entitled "Catholic-Orthodox Relations in the CCEO" is Prof. Dr Pablo Gefaell who teaches Canon Law in the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome. Prof. Gefaell, a member of Opus Dei, having doctorates both in Latin and Eastern Canon Law, has directed a number of doctoral theses of Indian Priests. Hence his knowledge in canon law and Indian ecclesial situations is unquestionable. One who reads

his article with keen attention will immediately realize that it is a well researched paper.

In this article he briefly presents the norms of the CCEO concerning the relationship between Catholics and Orthodox. The author, being aware of the already prevalent documents and agreements on specific pastoral issues between the Catholic Church and some Oriental Orthodox Churches in India, however, suggests that in India some other documents could also be drafted in order to clarify the Church's relationships with the various Orthodox Churches. The author analyzes the consequences of certain normative points in which the Orthodox are involved: first of all, he presents some canons which helps one to reflect on the juridical capacity of the Orthodox Churches; Secondly, on some ecumenical possibilities in the area of matrimony; thirdly a brief explanation of the norms on baptism concerning the relations with the Orthodox; fourthly, on the norms on reception of Orthodox persons who come to Catholic unity; and finally on the *communicatio in sacris* and its theological basis.

The second article is written by Dr Sebastian Mathew Villukulam, a priest of

the diocese of Vijayapuram who recently has defended his doctoral thesis in Canon Law from the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross under the guidance of Prof. Pablo Gefaell. The title of the article is "The Praxis of *Communicatio in sacris* in the Churches in Kerala, India." He writes about theological bases and the canonical norms for *Communicatio in Sacris*, by establishing the Eucharistic Ecclesiology as the Basis of Sacramental Sharing. While treating on the praxis of *Communicatio in Sacris* in the Churches in Kerala, he explains about the various meetings which took place between the Catholic Church and the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church and the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church. He concretely refers to the mode of agreements arrived during such joint sessions on sacramental sharing between the Churches. He also has made good mention on other areas of pastoral collaboration between these Churches.

Apart from the above mentioned two articles on ecumenism this issue of Christian Orient also contains a third article "Catholicity of the Church" by Thomas Puthukulangara, the first part of which had been published in the last issue of this journal.

Dr. Sebastian Vaniyapurackal

Catholic-Orthodox Relations in the CCEO*

Dr. Pablo Gefaell

In this article I will briefly present the norms of the CCEO concerning the relationship between Catholics and Orthodox. So far my studies have concentrated mainly on the subject of Orthodox immigrants who in countries with a Latin majority like Spain and Italy are turning to Catholic pastors for lack of priests of their own Church. In response to these requests, the Spanish Bishops' Conference a few years ago issued a document on the pastoral services offered to the Orthodox¹, and last year the Italian Bishops' Conference also prepared its own

"Vademecum"² to provide criteria for action in these cases.

I think that in India some documents could also be drafted in order to clarify the Church's relationships with the various Orthodox Churches, however taking into account that the country's pastoral needs are very different from those of the above-mentioned countries, as well as considering the peculiar circumstances of ecumenical relations in this country. I am aware that pertinent documents and agreements on specific pastoral issues between the Catholic Church and some Oriental Orthodox

* Reviewed and adapted English version of the article: P. GEFELL, *Rapporti tra orientali cattolici ed ortodossi nel CCEO*, in *Atti del congresso «Codex Canonum Orientalium 1990-2010: Receptare i applicabilitate în Bisericile sui iuris»*, Sediul Curiei Arhiepiscopie Majore – Blaj (Romania), October 29-31 2010 (under publication).

¹ CONFERENCIA EPISCOPAL ESPAÑOLA, *Servicios pastorales a orientales no católicos. Orientaciones*, approved in the LXXXVIth Plenary Assembly of the same Episcopal Conference (March 27-31, 2006), in «Boletín Oficial de la Conferencia Episcopal Española», year XX, No. 76 (June 30, 2006), pp. 51-55 [hereafter: CEE, *Orientaciones*]. Cf., anche, P. GEFELL, *Nota ai documenti della Conferenza Episcopale Spagnola "Orientaciones para la atención pastoral de los católicos orientales en España (17-21 de noviembre de 2003)" e "Servicios pastorales a orientales no católicos. Orientaciones (27-31 de marzo de 2006)"*, in «Ius Ecclesiae» 18 (2006), pp. 861-876.

² CONFERENZA EPISCOPALE ITALIANA - UFFICIO NAZIONALE PER L'ECUMENISMO E IL DIALOGO INTERRELIGIOSO & UFFICIO NAZIONALE PER I PROBLEMI GIURIDICI, *Vademecum per la cura pastorale delle parrocchie cattoliche verso gli orientali non cattolici*, 23 febbraio 2010, in www.chiesacattolica.it [hereafter: CEI, *Vademecum*].

Churches in India have already been published, as we will see later, but comprehensive guidelines on Orthodox-Catholic relations would be very useful for Pastors.

As is well known, Vatican II wished to emphasize that the Eastern Catholic Churches have a very significant ecumenical role, especially regarding the Orthodox Churches³. Everybody is aware that this is not an easy task, and for its success I believe it is necessary that in ecumenical relations we proclaim loyally our own convictions of faith, live our own discipline faithfully, and know how to explain its foundations well.

In fact, all the magisterial and normative documents issued by the Apostolic See on the relationship between Catholics and the Orthodox faithful intend to provide criteria to ensure that ecumenical activity be carried out in harmony with the unity of faith and discipline which unites Catholics, avoiding doctrinal confusion and abuses that lead to

ecclesiological indifferentism or undue proselytism.⁴ This loyalty to one's proper convictions within the dialogue is for the sake of avoiding only apparent solutions that in the end would lead neither to firm nor to solid results.⁵ As Pope John Paul II said: «In the body of Christ, who is “the Way, the Truth and the Life”, who could consider a legitimate reconciliation brought about at the expense of truth?»⁶

Regarding the term “proselytism”, I would like to offer a clarification which to me seems necessary. Many years ago, a student of mine, after hearing that the Magisterium had apparently condemned proselytism,⁷ asked me with embarrassment if this now implied that he could no longer wish nor do anything to promote full unity with the Holy Father. I pointed out to him that, as John Paul II said, those texts of the Magisterium speak simply of «the rejection of all *undue* forms of proselytism, with the avoidance in the most absolute way in pastoral action of any temptation to violence and any form of pressure.»⁸ Such

³ VATICAN II, Decree *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, No. 24.

⁴ Cf. PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN UNITY, *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*, “*La recherche de l’unité*”, French original version in AAS 85 (1993), pp. 1039-1119, Nos. 6 and 23. English translation is taken from www.vatican.va. [Hereafter: ED 1993].

⁵ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Ut Unum Sint*, May 25th, 1995, in AAS 87 (1995) pp. 921-982, No. 79.

⁶ *Ibid.*, No. 18. Cf. P. GEFELL, “*L’eccesiologia eucaristica e il primato del vescovo di Roma*”, in AA.VV. *Escritos en honor de Javier Hervada*, «*Ius Canonicum*» special volume (1999), pp. 247-264 [here, p. 248].

⁷ Cf. *Ad Gentes* No. 13; *Dignitatis humanae* No. 4; ED 1993, No. 23.

⁸ JOHN PAUL II, Letter *Mentre si intensificano*, to the European Bishops on the relationships between Catholics and Orthodox, May 31, 1991, in AAS 84 (1992), pp. 163-168, No. 5. English translation is from www.vatican.va.

condemnation, therefore, does not imply that Catholics cannot or should not proclaim their faith, with charity but also clarity, in the will of Christ concerning the necessary unity with the Roman Pontiff, the successor of Peter. This is confirmed by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: «With non-Catholic Christians, Catholics must enter into a respectful dialogue of charity and truth, a dialogue which is not only an exchange of ideas, but also of gifts, in order that the fullness of the means of salvation can be offered to one's partners in dialogue (...). In such case, it would not be a question of proselytism in the negative sense that has been attributed to this term. (...) Therefore, the work of ecumenism does not remove the right nor take away the responsibility of proclaiming in fullness the Catholic faith to other Christians, who freely wish to receive it. (...). The witness to the truth does not seek to impose anything by force, neither by coercive action nor by tactics incompatible with the Gospel.»⁹ In fact, the conciliar declaration *Dignitatis Humanae* had already stated that «Religious communities also

have the right not to be hindered in their public teaching and witness to their faith, whether by the spoken or by the written word.»¹⁰

At the beginning of the work of the new Oriental codification some inspiring principles were established to guide the Commission through the drafting process. One such principle stated that «the future Code shall declare that it holds only for those who legitimately belong to an Oriental Catholic Church,»¹¹ and has thus been codified as the first canon of CCEO. Some authors have argued that there was no need to say this, as it is already obvious, but nevertheless it seemed appropriate in order to make it clear that there is not the slightest claim that this Code applies to the Orthodox faithful. There are, however, many canons establishing criteria for the relations with the Orthodox.

Although the Holy Father John Paul II has said that all the dispositions of the Oriental Code foster the unity of Christians,¹² I will not discuss here the ecumenical activity in the strict sense

⁹ CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, *Nota Doctrinalis de quibusdam rationibus evangelizationis*, 3 December 2007, in AAS 100 (2008), pp. 489-504, No. 12. English translation is from www.vatican.va.

¹⁰ VATICAN II, Declaration *Dignitatis Humanae* No. 4.

¹¹ PONTIFICIA COMMISSIONE CODEX IURIS CANONICI ORIENTALIS RECOGNOSCENDO, *Guidelines for the Revision of the Code of Oriental Canon Law – Ecumenical Character of the CICO*, No. 1, in «*Nuntia*» 3 (1976), p. 20.

¹² «There is no norm in the Code that does not favor the path towards unity among Christians and there are clear norms for Oriental Catholic Churches on how to promote this unity» JOHN PAUL II, *Discorso al Sinodo dei Vescovi nella presentazione del “Codice dei Canoni delle Chiese orientali”*, October 25, 1990, in «*L’Osservatore Romano*» 27 ottobre 1990, pp. 4-5, No. 13 (English translation is mine).

(dialogue, prayer and activities, etc.), with which the title XVIII of CCEO (cc. 902-908) deals. Neither will I dwell too much on rules for the baptized non-Catholics who come to full communion with the Catholic Church (CCEO tit. XVII cc. 896-901).¹³

Instead, I will analyze the consequences of certain normative points in which the Orthodox are involved: first, I will briefly present some canons that can help us reflect on the juridical capacity of the Orthodox Churches; then I will discuss some ecumenical possibilities in the area of matrimony; after that will follow a brief explanation of the norms on baptism concerning the relations with the Orthodox; then I will briefly discuss the norms on reception of Orthodox persons who come to Catholic unity; and finally I will focus on the *communicatio in sacris* and its theological basis.

1. Juridical-canonical ability of the Orthodox Churches.¹⁴

The norms contained in CCEO cc. 780 § 2 and 781 (also gathered in the Instruction *Dignitas connubii*¹⁵ Arts. 2 and 4) raise the question as to what extent the Catholic Church recognizes the ability of Orthodox bishops to make laws. In my opinion, these Catholic canons do not simply "canonize" some non-canonical norms but rather recognize the *canonicity* of Orthodox laws.¹⁶ I think that this may be seen, for example, in the decree of the Apostolic Signatura on 3 January 2007, which states that an Orthodox faithful civilly married against Orthodox laws, who afterwards wishes to marry a Catholic, does not need to introduce a judicial trial of marriage nullity to declare him free to marry, but only a pre-marital investigation conducted by the parish priest or hierarch, since his/her marriage celebrated without the blessing of the Orthodox priest is considered non-existent.¹⁷

¹³ Cf. P. GEFELL, *L'ammissione alla piena comunione di quanti provengono da altre confessioni*, in AA.VV. *Iniziazione cristiana: profili generali* («Quaderni della Mendola» 16), Milano 2008, pp. 155-172.

¹⁴ Cf. P. GEFELL, *Major Contributions of CCEO during the Past 20 Years*, in «*Justitia*», 1/1-2 (2010), pp. 84-117, which is a revised and augmented English version of the article: P. GEFELL, *El Derecho oriental desde la promulgación del CIC y del CCEO*, in «*Ius canonicum*» 49 (2009), pp. 37-65.

¹⁵ PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR LEGISLATIVE TEXTS, Instruction *Dignitas Connubii*, to be observed by diocesan and interdiocesan tribunals in handling causes of the nullity of Marriage, January 25, 2005, Libreria editrice vaticana 2005.

¹⁶ Cf. P. GEFELL, *Basi ecclesiologiche della giurisdizione delle Chiese ortodosse sui matrimoni misti*, in J. CARRERAS (ed.), *La giurisdizione della Chiesa sul matrimonio e sulla famiglia*, Roma 1998, pp. 127-148.

¹⁷ APOSTOLIC SIGNATURE, *Decree of January 3, 2007*, P.N. 38964/06 VT, published with a commentary of G. P. MONTINI, *La procedura di investigazione prematrimoniale è idonea alla comprovazione dello stato libero di fedeli ortodossi che hanno tentato il matrimonio civile*, in «*Periodica*» 97 (2008), pp. 47-98.

In close connection with what we just said, we should ask about the Orthodox Authority's ability to make judicial judgments recognized by the Catholic Church. We recall that on October 20, 2006 the Apostolic Signatura declared that the judgments of "annulment" of previous marriages issued by the Romanian Orthodox Church are not recognized as valid in order to admit an Orthodox to a mixed marriage in the Catholic Church.¹⁸ This declaration, however, does not claim to be based on the inability of the Orthodox Church to make ecclesiastic judgments, but rather on the fact that those specific judgments are actually equal to divorce, which the Catholic Church considers contrary to divine right. Therefore, if the Orthodox authorities eventually made an authentic declaration of nullity of marriage (something unfortunately not likely) I do

not see why the Catholic Church would not accept it.¹⁹

2. Catholic-Orthodox Relationships in the Field of Matrimonial Law

Mixed marriages are obviously the most frequent ground of existential and legal relationships between Orthodox faithful and Catholics, whose discipline I suppose is already well known, and so I won't dwell too much on it. I would only like to mention one indication from the Ecumenical Directory of 1993: «The obligation imposed by some [orthodox] Churches (...) for the observance of their own form of marriage is not a motive for automatic dispensation from the Catholic canonical form. Such particular situations should form the subject of dialogue between the Churches, at least at the local level» (ED 1993, No. 155).²⁰ I cannot now deal with

¹⁸ Cf. APOSTOLIC SIGNATURE, *Declaration of October 20, 2006*, P.N. 37577/05 VAR, in «Communicationes» 39 (2007), pp. 66-67.

¹⁹ Cf. P. GEFÄELL, *La giurisdizione delle Chiese ortodosse per giudicare sulla validità del matrimonio dei loro fedeli*, in «Ius Ecclesiae» 19 (2007), pp. 773-791.

²⁰ In India, the 1993 *Pastoral Guidelines on Marriages Between Members of the Catholic Church and of the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church*, seems unrestrictedly to allow mixed-marriage celebration by either the Catholic or the Syrian Orthodox minister (cf. «Information Service» 84/III-IV [1993], pp. 160-161, Nos. 4 and 18; quoted from S. MATHEW [VILLUKULAM], *Sharing in Sacraments – The Doctrine of the Catholic Church with a Juridical and Theological view on its Praxis in Christian Kerala*, Pontificia Universitas Sanctae Crucis – Facultas Iuris Canonici, Thesis ad Doctoratum in Iure Canonico totaliter edita, Romae 2011, Appendix X, specially pp. 298-301). Actually, in Catholic-Orthodox marriages CCEO can. 834 § 2 requires [Catholic] canonical form only for liceity. Nevertheless in these cases the Catholic bishop should always grant "permission" (not a dispensation) for celebrating them licitly outside the Catholic Church. I am aware that new proposals are being discussed between these Catholic and the Malankara Orthodox Churches (cf. MATHEW [VILLUKULAM], *Sharing in Sacraments*, Appendix V, pp. 285-287) which maybe will eventually clarify this point.

all the details on mixed marriages; suffice it to say that a good exposition of the legislation can be found in the CEI's *Vademecum*, Nos. 32-14, 42 and 44-47.

Still, mixed marriages are not the only cases in which relations exist between these Churches in the field of matrimonial Law. Let us see some examples.

The possibility that, in the absence of respective competent priest the marriage of two Orthodox christians be blessed by a Catholic priest (CCEO can. 833) and, conversely, that the marriage between two Catholics celebrated in extraordinary form be blessed by an Orthodox priest (CCEO can. 832 § 2) may be an infrequent occurrence, but it ought not to be neglected. Such a possibility does question the meaning of this blessing. Personally, I think this blessing does not mean that the priest "celebrates" the marriage, because he is not competent for the canonical form:²¹ neither is the Catholic priest competent for the marriage of two Orthodox²² nor the Orthodox priest for the marriage of two Catholics.²³ It is rather a blessing attached to a marriage already validly celebrated in

the Extraordinary Form. However, we cannot deny that this claim is difficult to understand for the Eastern Churches, because the fact that the priest simply blesses the couple can be easily confused with the actual celebration of the marriage, since in the Eastern discipline the blessing is an essential part of the celebration of the sacrament of matrimony.

3. Relationship in the field of Baptism

Here I will not stop to note the well-known legislation on godparents, etc., but rather on a few points which seem especially interesting to me.

It may be surprising to note that the CCEO provides the opportunity for a child of Orthodox parents to be baptized by an Eastern Catholic priest, but remain incorporated into the Orthodox Church (CCEO can. 681 § 5). Besides in cases of danger of death, this can happen only in the absence of Orthodox priests and if the parents request it of their own accord. The above cited documents from the Spanish and Italian Episcopal Conferences have completed the norm of the Oriental canon establishing that «in this case, the baptism

²¹ The *Vademecum* of the Italian Episcopal Conference is of the same advice. In fact, in No. 43 it asserts: «This benediction is different from the canonical form. In this sphere, the Catholic Church respects the jurisdiction of the Oriental Non-Catholic Church to which the spouses belong. Therefore, to be able to bless their matrimony, it is necessary that such Church recognizes the validity of this wedding. It belongs to the Non-Catholic Church to provide for it to be registered and obtain civil legal effects.» (English translation is mine).

²² None of the spouses belong to the Church of the priest, as is required by both codes: cf. CIC can. 1109 & CCEO can. 829 § 1.

²³ The Orthodox priest is neither priest nor Hierarch of the place for Catholics, nor can he be validly delegated, as both codes require: CCEO can. 828 § 1 & CIC can. 1108 § 1.

must not be registered in the book of baptism records of the Catholic parish, but in a special Diocesan register, delivering the relevant certificate to the parents».²⁴ The CIC does not grant this possibility to priests of the Latin rite; on the contrary, according to the CIC can. 868 § 1, the minister of baptism must have the sure hope that the child will be educated in the Catholic religion, without exceptions, thus preventing the application of this Oriental norm to Latin ministers.

Eastern Catholic priests rarely receive such requests by Orthodox faithful. However, the converse situation has happened frequently in Eastern European countries when the Eastern Catholic Churches were suppressed by the Communist regime. In fact, in those circumstances, many Greek-Catholic parents, for lack of their priests, were demanding baptism of their children to Orthodox priests, but desiring that they remain Catholic, even if in practice they would remain registered as Orthodox.²⁵

For these cases, the Spanish and Italian Episcopal Conferences have established that:

«the child of Catholic parents or the adult who, desiring to be Catholic, has received the baptism in an Eastern non-Catholic Church because of extreme necessity may rectify his/her situation through registration in the book of baptisms of the Catholic parish.»²⁶

There is a practice of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches which raises certain questions: for, according to the Congregation, the son of a mixed marriage must always be considered as Catholic, even when he has been baptized in the Church of the Orthodox parent. Personally I think that this directive is based on an interpretation of CCEO can. 29 § 1, which takes no account of the change of context made by CCEO can. 814 (= CIC can. 1125): According to this canon, in mixed marriages the Catholic party must promise to "do everything possible" in order that the children be baptized and educated in the Catholic Church, implicitly recognizing that in some cases it can happen that, despite having done everything possible, the child has not been incorporated

²⁴ CEI, *Vademecum*, No. 10; Cf. CEE, *Orientaciones*, No. 7. (English translation is mine).

²⁵ It must be said that for Catholic parents the CCEO does not provide the possibility of asking for baptism from a Non-Catholic minister, but if a Catholic priest is lacking, baptism may be conferred by other Christian faithful, even by their own parents (CCEO can. 677 § 2). Therefore, recourse to a Non-Catholic minister would be possible only in an extraordinary situation where no Catholic faithful were available to perform the baptism.

²⁶ CEI, *Vademecum*, No. 59; cf. also CEE, *Orientaciones*, No. 26. (English translation is mine).

in the Catholic Church.²⁷ However, the practice of the Congregation continues in force.

4. About Orthodox faithful who wish to come to Catholic unity.

The Episcopal Conferences' documents that we have mentioned establish that the Orthodox faithful who wishes of his own accord to become a Catholic must make a written request to the diocesan bishop, who will then assess the right dispositions of the candidate.²⁸ Nevertheless, in Eastern discipline the parish priest is also allowed to receive lay persons, unless particular law has stated otherwise (CCEO can. 898 § 3). Hence I do not think that in an Eastern Church the Bishop ought to intervene for the reception of lay persons.

Another case of incorporation to the Catholic Church is indicated by a private response in 2002 from the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, in which it

indicated that an Orthodox minor under 14 years adopted by Latin parents automatically becomes Catholic and Latin.²⁹ It seems to me reasonable that children follow the Church of their parents, and it is clear that in principle adoption establishes a filial relationship. However, in some cases we should consider other circumstances to see if it is reasonable that the adopted child lose his ritual heritage of birth (e.g. in the case of a boy of nearly fourteen and being adopted with an adoption without full civil effects).

CCEO can. 35 has provoked much discussion. This norm establishes the Catholic *sui iuris* Church to which a non-Catholic being received into full communion should be enrolled. As the canon does not have an invalidity clause (cf. CCEO can. 1495 – CIC can. 10), some think that it concerns only the lawfulness of enrollment (namely, they consider valid the enrollment even if it were not done in the Church *sui iuris* corresponding to that

²⁷ Cf. D. SALACHAS, *Lo status giuridico del figlio minorenne nei matrimoni misti tra cattolici ed ortodossi. Un problema ecclesiologico, giuridico ed ecumenico*, in H. ZAPP – A. WEISS – S. KORTA (eds.), *Ius canonicum in Oriente et in Occidente*, pp. 743-758; R. ALHLERS, *Rituszugehörigkeit und Rituswechsel nach CIC und CCEO*, in *ibid.* pp. 423-432; A. KAPTIJN, *Le statut juridique des enfants mineurs nés des mariages mixtes catholiques-orthodoxes*, in «*L'année canonique*» 46 (2004), pp. 259-268; P. GEFAELL, *Matrimonio misto ed ascrizione ecclesiastica dei propri figli: una questione riaperta? Riflessioni su alcune considerazioni recenti*, in «*Folia Canonica*» 12 (2009), pp. 153-166.

²⁸ Cf. CEI, *Vademecum*, n. 49; CEE, *Orientaciones*, n. 23.

²⁹ CONGREGATION FOR ORIENTAL CHURCHES, *Ukrainian Orthodox Infant Ascribed to Rite of Adoptive Parents*, en S. PEDONE & J. DONLON, (eds.), *Roman Replies and CLSA Advisory Opinions* (2003), Washington D.C. 2003, pp. 23-24.

of origin). But others³⁰ argue that, not being a “legal act” but a “legal fact”, the ascription to the Church *sui iuris* parallel to that of origin is automatic and any other ascription would be invalid (unless there be a recourse to the Apostolic See). I think the matter deserves an authoritative answer.

5. Norms on *communicatio in sacris* in Eucharist, Penance and Anointing of the Sick

Let us now turn to a crucial point: the sharing of the sacraments of Eucharist, Penance and Anointing of the Sick. Due to its singular ecclesiological significance, I will focus especially on the Eucharist.³¹

a) The necessity to consult the Orthodox Hierarchy before establishing particular norms on sacramental sharing.³²

According to CCEO can. 671 § 5 (= CIC, can. 844 § 5), before establishing

specific norms on sacramental sharing, the Catholic authority should consult the local Orthodox hierarchy. The 1993 Ecumenical Directory recommended that certain rules be established in the case of Christians belonging to separated non-Eastern Churches and Ecclesial Communities (cf. ED 1993, No. 130), but with respect to the various Orthodox Churches this has not been stated clearly and expressly.³³ If neither the Synod of Bishops nor the local authority provide guidelines for these cases, it will be very difficult to judge any particular case, because, as the Ecumenical Directory of 1993 recalls, «a Catholic who legitimately wishes to communicate with Eastern [Orthodox] Christians must respect the Eastern [Orthodox] discipline as much as possible and refrain from communicating if that Church restricts sacramental communion to its own members to the exclusion of others» (No. 124) and, also,

³⁰ J. FARIS, *A Canonical Examination of the Acquisition, Consequences and Loss of Membership in a Church – A Catholic Perspective*, in «Folia Canonica» 4 (2001), pp. 135-153:148; V.J. POSPISHIL, *Eastern Catholic Church Law*, Second Revised and Augmented Edition, Saint Maron Publications, Staten Island (New York) 1996, p. 125; F. MARINI, ‘*Ipsò iure*’ Adscription to a Catholic Church ‘*sui iuris*’ of Baptized Converts, in S. PEDONE & J. DONLON (eds.), *Roman Replies and CLSA Advisory Opinions* (2003), Washington D.C. 2003, pp. 114-116 [here, p. 115].

³¹ Cf. P. GEFAELL, *L’Eucaristia e la cura pastorale degli ortodossi*, in G. RUYSEN (ed.), *Dalle fonti dei canoni: Festschrift Ivan Šušek, S.J. – «La divina Eucaristia nel diritto canonico orientale»*, Proceedings of Bratislava’s Symposium, April 14-17, 2009, («Kanonika» 16), P.I.O., Rome 2010, pp. 189-201.

³² Cf. P. GEFAELL, *Il nuovo Direttorio ecumenico e la ‘Communicatio in sacris’*, in «Ius Ecclesiae», 6 (1994), pp. 259-279 [here, pp. 269-271].

³³ ED 1993 says in general: «it is recommended that consultations on this sharing take place between appropriate Catholic authorities and those of other Communions» (No. 106), but regarding the relationships with the Orthodox the convenience of establishing norms at local or national level is not mentioned (cf. No. 123). Although – obviously – from this cannot be inferred that it is forbidden.

when a Catholic minister administers these sacraments to the members of the Orthodox Churches, he must give due consideration to the discipline of these Churches for their own faithful (cf. No. 125). Without criteria being established by the competent authority, appropriate to the specific situations of the place and persons, it would be difficult to comply with such provisions.

However, it is necessary to note that the CIC and the CCEO requires that the Catholic authorities only «consult» Orthodox authorities, and no longer requires the «positive outcome» of this consultation, as the old 1970 Ecumenical Directory stated.³⁴

b) Why does the Catholic Church allow for the sharing of some sacraments with the Orthodox?

This is a very important and sensitive issue. We need to explain the reasons for Catholic legislation on this matter, because Orthodox Churches completely forbid *communicatio in sacris* and do not understand why we allow it. Moreover, the abuses committed by some clergy, which

deviate from canonical norm, makes it more difficult for Catholics and Orthodox to arrive at a mutual understanding.

Given the close relationship between ecclesial communion and sacramental communion, the general principle for the sharing of the sacraments is that «Catholic ministers licitly administer the sacraments only to Catholic Christian faithful, who, likewise, licitly receive the sacraments only from Catholic ministers.»³⁵ Indeed, until the visible links of ecclesial communion be fully restored, a general *intercommunion* with those who are not in full unity with the Catholic Church is impossible.³⁶ For, as Pope Benedict the XVIth recalls, «the respect we owe to the sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood prevents us from making it a mere "means" to be used indiscriminately in order to attain that unity. (cf. UUS No. 8) The Eucharist in fact not only manifests our personal communion with Jesus Christ, but also implies full *communio* with the Church. This is why we ask, sadly (but not without hope), that Christians who are not Catholic understand and respect our conviction, which is grounded on the Bible and Tradition. We hold that eucharistic

³⁴ SECRETARIAT FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN UNITY, *Ecumenical Directory, II. "Spiritus Domini"*, in AAS 62 (1970), pp. 705-724, No. 42, (English translation from: «Information Service» 10 [1970], pp. 3-10), Hereafter: DE 1970. In fact, during the drafting of can. 844 of CIC 1983 it was established that: «*loco "favorabilem exitum consultationis" dicatur: "consultationem" quia activitas legislativa interna Ecclesiae vinculari non potest consensui partis non catholicae, sine eventuali praiejudicio pastoralium necessitatum (Duo Patres). Atque nimis et sine necessitate restringit potestatem Ecclesiae et serias in praxi gignit difficultates (Tres Patres)*», («Communicationes», 15 [1983], p. 176).

³⁵ CCEO can. 671 § 1 = CIC can. 844 § 1.

³⁶ JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, April 17, 2003, in AAS 95 (2003), pp. 433-475, n. 45.

communion and ecclesial communion are so linked as to make it generally impossible for non-Catholic Christians to receive the former without enjoying the latter.»³⁷

The Orthodox are in agreement with Catholics in this general rule. As a matter of fact, Orthodox doctrine utterly forbids sacramental sharing with anyone who is not in ecclesial communion with the Orthodox Church.³⁸ In fact, even for the Orthodox, the sharing of sacraments is not a means for the realization of unity but rather a means to strengthen and nourish it.³⁹ Furthermore, they rigidly follow the *aut-*

aut principle, which is to say: either you are in communion with us or either you are not and, therefore, you may not receive our sacraments.⁴⁰

It is well known, however, that in some cases the Catholic Church allows for the sharing the sacraments of the Eucharist, Penance and Anointing of the sick to Christians who are not in full communion with the Catholic Church. To explain this practice, we must bear in mind that the admission to these three sacraments concerns only those Christians who manifest a faith fully compliant with that

³⁷ BENEDICT XVI, Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum caritatis*, February 22, 2007, in AAS 99 (2007), pp. 105-180, No. 56. English translation is from www.vatican.va.

³⁸ See, for example, the words of the Orthodox scholar Radu Preda: «Being the liturgical dimension the expression of faith, participation in the sacramental communion can be neither real nor a true builder of unity if it is not the outcome of dogmatic communion. In other words, the liturgical communion is the crowning of the communion in faith, the visible element of profound unity. Otherwise it would not be a gesture of unity but a syncretistic gesture. This is the sense of the canons of Ecumenical and Local Synods which prohibit intercommunion with schismatics and/or heretics.» R. PREDA, *La Communicatio in sacris*, in PONTIFICO CONSIGLIO PER I TESTI LEGISLATIVI (ed.), *Il Codice delle Chiese Orientali. La storia, le legislazioni particolari, le prospettive ecumeniche*, Atti del Convegno di Studio tenutosi nel XX anniversario della promulgazione del Codice dei Canoni delle Chiese orientali, Sala S. Pio X, Roma 8-9 ottobre 2010, Libreria editrice vaticana, Città del Vaticano 2011, pp. 383-392 [here pp. 391-392]. English translation is mine.

³⁹ Cf. V.I. PAPE•, *Diritto canonico ed ecumenismo*, in PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE INTERPRETATION OF LEGISLATIVE TEXTS, *Ius in vita et in missione Ecclesiae*, Libreria editrice vaticana 1994, pp. 1190-1193 [here p. 1197]; and also, G.A. GALITIS, *Le problème de l'intercommunion sacramentelle avec les non-Orthodoxes d'un point de vue Orthodoxe*, in «Istina» 14 (1969), p. 206; I. BRIA, *Intercommunion et unité*, in «Istina» 14 (1969), p. 221; E. TIMIADIS, *Intercommunion: possibilités et limites*, in «Parole et Pain» 8 (1971) pp. 47-74.

⁴⁰ «Orthodox have always rejected the term and concept of intercommunion ... asserting that either there is "communion" in the only Church or either it does not exist at all. This position is shared also by Roman Catholic Church ... although both Churches differ on what they consider necessary for that unity, of which Eucharistic communion is the sacramental expression» (G. WAINWRIGHT, *Intercomunione*, in AA.VV., *Dizionario del movimento Ecumenico*, EDB, Bologna 1994, p. 626. English translation is mine).

of the Catholic Church regarding these sacraments and who are in grave spiritual need concerning their eternal salvation: «In this case, in fact, the intention is to meet a grave spiritual need for the eternal salvation of an individual believer, not to bring about an *intercommunion*.»⁴¹

So, generally speaking, if the ecclesial situation of a non-Catholic Christian is not thought to be culpable (i.e., he is not to blame for being born outside the Catholic Church) and moreover, if he has true faith in the sacrament and true spiritual need to receive it, he can also have the right intention and the necessary disposition to participate fruitfully in it. That is to say: receiving the sacrament, he is able to receive the sanctifying grace and specifically the sacramental graces. Thus the Catholic Church believes that it can meet this need by administering those sacraments.⁴²

Therefore, the only theological justification that has allowed the Catholic Church to grant the admission of non-Catholic Christians to these sacraments is their own need to obtain the grace that only these sacraments can offer. But how can all this be possible without damaging the unity of the Church? And above all, in the area of the Eucharist, how is this compatible

with the full profession of faith proper to those who take part in the Eucharistic Celebration? Unity of faith is the foundation of the previous ecclesial unity which in the Eucharistic mystery becomes a consumed unity. This unity of faith embraces *all* the doctrines of faith, and not only *some* of them. The situation would be difficult to explain if the criterion was to admit a non-Catholic to the Eucharist when he explicitly confessed his faith in the Eucharist, but not *all* other doctrines of the Catholic faith. Indeed, how can we give the “sacrament of communion” to someone who is not in full communion?

The answer is complex: in addition to asserting that there are “degrees of communion” and that the Orthodox are “almost in full communion”, the Catholic Church believes that the Orthodox’s *perfect* profession of Eucharistic faith — that is, in full agreement with the Catholic Magisterium in this regard — brings with it the implicit acceptance of the whole teaching of Christ (which we believe subsists in the Catholic Church). This complete but implicit faith would become explicit if the faithful Christian, assisted by divine grace, were to delve more deeply into the doctrinal implications of the Eucharistic mystery.⁴³

⁴¹ JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, No. 45.

⁴² For further study cf. G.-H. RUYSEN, *Eucharistie et œcuménisme : évolution de la normativité universelle et comparaison avec certaines normes particulières, canons 844/CIC et 671/CCEO*, Les Éditions du Cerf, Paris 2008, pp. 57-83.

⁴³ Cf. P. RODRÍGUEZ, *Iglesia y ecumenismo*, Madrid 1979, pp. 364-392; P. GEFAELL, *Principi dottrinali per la normativa sulla communicatio in sacris*, in «Ius Ecclesiae» 8 (1996), pp. 509-528 [here, pp. 522-523]. A similar although not identical explanation is given by Coccopalmerio: cf. F. COCCOPALMERIO, *La “communicatio in sacris” comme probleme de communion ecclesiale*, in «L’Année Canonique» 25 (1981), p. 229.

Indeed, as the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith asserts, in the case of the Orthodox, their valid celebration of the Eucharist calls *objectively* for communion with Peter,⁴⁴ even though *subjectively* they have not reached it yet.

Let us see now the established conditions for sharing the Eucharist with the Orthodox.

c) Requirements to be able to share the Eucharist

The conditions laid down in the Codes so that a Catholic minister may

legitimately administer the sacrament of the Eucharist to Orthodox faithful may seem too broad, namely: the demand for the sacrament be of their own accord and that they are properly disposed.⁴⁵ They seem too broad because they are in fact the same conditions for a Catholic faithful to request the sacrament from a Catholic minister.⁴⁶ Taking into account only the texts of the Codes, someone might think that the Church therefore grants to the Orthodox a full and free admission to the sacrament, but this is false.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ «Every valid celebration of the Eucharist expresses this universal communion with Peter and with the whole Church, or objectively calls for it, as in the case of the Christian Churches separated from Rome» (CDF, Letter *Comunionis Notio*, No. 14: English translation from www.vatican.va). Because «every legitimate celebration of the People of God requires the constitutive structure of the Church as priestly body hierarchically structured and, therefore, it requires also the link of communion of the local Church with its bishop, and of this bishop with his brothers in the episcopate and their Head, as a College which is continuation of the Apostolic Body» EDITORIAL, *La Chiesa come Comunione. A un anno dalla pubblicazione della Lettera "Comunionis notio" della Congregazione per la Dottrina della Fede*, in «L'Osservatore Romano», June 23 1993, pp. 1 e 4. (English translation is mine).

⁴⁵ «Catholic ministers licitly administer the sacraments of penance, the Eucharist and anointing of the sick to Christian faithful of Eastern Churches, who do not have full communion with the Catholic Church, if they ask for them on their own and are properly disposed» (CCEO can. 671 § 3 & CIC can. 844 § 3).

⁴⁶ Cf. CCEO can. 671 § 1 & CIC can. 844 § 1.

⁴⁷ It would be a mistake to consider this sacramental sharing with the Orthodox as if it were a free intercommunion (cf. F. COCCOPALMERIO, «*Communicatio in sacris iuxta novum Codicem*», in AA.VV. *Portare Cristo all'Uomo*, II, [«*Studia Urbaniana*» 23], Rome 1985, p. 215). In fact, John Paul II recalled that intercommunion between divided Christians is not the answer to the call of Christ to perfect unity (JOHN PAUL II, *Allocution of October 5, 1979*, in *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, II, 2, p. 640; cf. IDEM, *Allocution of March 6, 1987*, in *ibid.* X, 1, p. 513). Cf. also what I have written on intercommunion in: P. GEFAELL, *Sharing in Sacramental Life: doctrinal principles and normatives in the New Ecumenical Directory*, in A. AL-AHMAR – A. KALIFÉ – D. LE TOURNEAU (eds.), *Acta Symposii internationalis circa Codicem Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium*, Kaslik (Liban) April 24-29, 1995, Kaslik 1996, pp. 315-367 [here, pp. 377-341].

In fact, it is necessary to add other conditions that were not explicitly mentioned in the Codes but which are still in force:

Firstly, it is known that the Codes do not mention the requirement of "grave spiritual need" in order that an Orthodox may ask for the sacrament of the Eucharist from a Catholic minister. In fact, the Secretariat for promoting Christian Unity in its 1972 Instruction indicated only «true spiritual need». ⁴⁸ However, No. 1401 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the Encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, No. 45, speak explicitly of «grave spiritual need». It would be good if the particular Law determine who should judge this «grave need».

Secondly, we all know that the legislation in force⁴⁹ does not mention the requirement of «lack of access to their own [Orthodox] minister». Thus, in theory, a member of an Orthodox Church would be allowed to receive the sacrament of the Eucharist (and Penance and Anointing of the sick) from a Catholic minister even when this Orthodox faithful could easily

access an Orthodox priest. However, if the Orthodox faithful does not approach his own minister – despite being able to do so without serious inconvenience – and still the Catholic minister admit him to the sacraments, the faithful might mistakenly think that it makes no difference whether one be Catholic or Orthodox, or it might happen that the Orthodox hierarchy judge the attitude of the Catholic minister as an attempt at unduly proselytism.⁵⁰ And so we shall have to judge on a case-by-case basis if the Orthodox faithful is in fact "well disposed", which presupposes the exclusion of polemical attitudes or syncretistic distortions, and further, that he has a just cause to approach the Catholic minister.

The just cause may be the *impossibility* of approaching his own minister. And if we take into account that which is established for Catholics, this impossibility may be not only *physical* but also *moral* (cf. ED 1993, No. 123)⁵¹, which can be caused by various personal situations that require prudential judgment.

During the work of the new Oriental codification, a consultative body proposed

⁴⁸ Cf. SECRETARIAT FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN UNITY, *Instructio de peculiaribus casibus admittendi alios christianos ad communionem eucharisticam in Ecclesia catholica*, June 1st, 1972, in AAS 64 (1972), pp. 518-525, No. 4.

⁴⁹ CCEO can. 671 § 3 CCEO; CIC can. 844 § 3; ED 1993, No. 125.

⁵⁰ «In these particular cases (...) any suggestion of proselytism should be avoided» (ED 1993, No. 125).

⁵¹ In fact, if CCEO can. 681 § 5 admits the moral impossibility of approaching their own Orthodox minister as a legitimate cause for the parents to ask for the baptism of their child from a Catholic minister, it seems to me that in the same way they can also invoke such moral impossibility in order to ask for Holy Communion.

that the norm laid down for the Orthodox who ask the sacraments to a Catholic priest (CCEO can. 671 § 3) be identical to that which governs the case of Catholics who approach an Orthodox priest (§ 2). However, the proposal was not accepted by the Commission.⁵²

Keeping in mind that the Orthodox hierarchy usually is against their faithful receiving Communion from Catholic ministers, it seems reasonable to require, as a minimum, that for the Orthodox faithful it be impossible (at least morally) to access his own minister. This condition could facilitate an agreement with the Orthodox hierarchy for the pastoral care of their faithful in those places where there are no Orthodox priests.

It is exceedingly unlikely that a Bishop (or priest) ever have a real “need” to receive the Eucharist from a minister of another Church, or that he cannot access the proper minister, since he personally can celebrate the Divine Liturgy and thus receive the Eucharist. Therefore, it seems to me obvious that giving Communion to an Orthodox priest has a very different meaning from giving it to a simple Orthodox faithful. Indeed, such a case would be almost comparable to

concelebrating with the priest, which as we will see later on, is absolutely prohibited.

Thirdly, the lawful admission of non-Catholic Christians (thus including the Orthodox) to the Eucharist can only happen in individual cases, and in special and exceptional circumstances.

In fact, even if this has been not established in the Codes, it has been explicitly said in the Encyclical Letter *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, which speaks of «the administration of the Eucharist *under special circumstances, to individual persons* belonging to Churches or Ecclesial Communities not in full communion with the Catholic Church» (No. 45). Further, in his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum caritatis*, Pope Benedict XVI reminds us that «for the sake of their eternal salvation, *individual non-Catholic Christians can be admitted to the Eucharist, the sacrament of Reconciliation and the Anointing of the Sick*. But this is possible only in specific, *exceptional situations* and requires that certain precisely defined conditions be met» (No. 56).

One of these special circumstances could be a mixed marriage with an Orthodox, that, with the permission of the

⁵² D. SALACHAS, *La comunione nel culto liturgico e nella vita sacramentale tra la Chiesa Cattolica e le altre Chiese e Comunità Ecclesiali*, in «*Angelicum*» 66 (1989), p. 414.

local Hierarch, is celebrated inside the Divine Liturgy: in this case, both the bride and groom could receive Eucharistic communion if they ask it on their own and are fittingly disposed.⁵³ However, during the rest of the conjugal life of those mixed couples, the sharing of the Eucharist cannot be but exceptional and, in any case, the above-mentioned general provisions have to be observed.⁵⁴

Fourthly, it is evident that the requirement to be "well disposed" to receive the Eucharist includes an objectively regular matrimonial situation (according to Divine Law).⁵⁵ Therefore, I think that divorced and remarried Orthodox faithful cannot be admitted to Communion in the Catholic Church, despite the fact that in their Church this is allowed.

d) Catholic faithful approaching Orthodox Eucharist

For a Catholic to legitimately approach Orthodox ministers to receive the

Holy Eucharist it is necessary that there be at least a real spiritual utility and a physical or moral impossibility to approach his own Catholic minister, as well as avoiding the danger of error or indifferentism.⁵⁶

CCEO can. 671 § 2 and CIC can. 844 § 2 allow Catholics to receive, under certain conditions, the sacraments of Eucharist, Penance and Anointing of the sick from non-Catholic ministers, without distinguishing explicitly between Orthodox ministers and ministers of other Christian denominations in the West. Some author felt the need to make this distinction (as there is in case of non-Catholics who ask for these sacraments from a Catholic minister),⁵⁷ because the Catholic Church assumes the validity of these sacraments in the Orthodox Churches, but not in other Christian denominations. The Ecumenical Directory of 1993 has suitably put into practice this distinction in Nos. 123 and 132.

Although Catholic discipline allows that Catholics may ask for the Eucharist to

⁵³ The ED 1993, No. 159, following the old Latin ritual of marriage, required the permission of the "diocesan bishop" for the celebration of a mixed marriage inside the Mass, but now the new Latin ritual of marriage requires only the permission of the local Ordinary (cf. *New ritual of the matrimony 2004*, General Premise, No. 36). Obviously, as ED 1993 No. 159 recalls, in order to admit the Orthodox partner to Holy Communion during the wedding ceremony, the general requisites of Law are in vigor, taking into account that one's own wedding seems to be a reasonable cause to admit the exception.

⁵⁴ Cf. ED 1993, No. 160.

⁵⁵ Cf. BENEDICT XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, No. 29.

⁵⁶ CIC can. 844 § 2 & CCEO can. 671 § 2.

⁵⁷ CCEO can. 671 §§ 3-4 & CIC can. 844 §§ 3-4. Cf. SALACHAS, *La comunione....*, pp. 408 e 412; IDEM, *L'iniziazione cristiana nei Codici orientali e latino. Battesimo, Cresima, Eucaristia nel CCEO e nel CIC*, Rome-Bologne 1992, p. 28.

Orthodox ministers in case of the impossibility of approaching their own Catholic minister, it should be taken into account that, as we have seen, the Orthodox Churches do not as a rule⁵⁸ admit Catholics to Eucharist under any circumstances. In this case the Catholic faithful must show consideration for the Orthodox discipline and therefore refrain from asking for Holy Communion.⁵⁹ Even if there were some complacent Orthodox priest ready to give the Eucharist to Catholics, generally⁶⁰ this would be against the discipline of his Church and could cause serious misunderstandings if the Orthodox Hierarchy were to hear about it. Moreover, if it were not impossible to access a Catholic minister, it would hardly be lawful for a Catholic faithful to ask for the Eucharist from an Orthodox minister. And therefore I think that Catholics should avoid receiving the Eucharist from an Orthodox minister in any case.

e) Other indications on the Eucharist in the ecumenical sphere

It is well known that Catholics may be present in the Eucharistic Celebration at an Orthodox Church and, if invited by them, to proclaim the readings. Likewise, an Orthodox faithful can be invited to do the same in a Catholic celebration.⁶¹ This does not pose too many problems if he be a lay faithful. A very different situation, however, would be the "liturgical" intervention of a sacred minister in a Eucharistic Celebration, although it would not strictly be a concelebration, as we will see below.

In fact, although in certain cases a Catholic minister is allowed to give Holy Communion to the Orthodox faithful to meet a serious spiritual need, we must reiterate, however, that the concelebration of the Eucharist between Catholic and Orthodox priests is strictly prohibited,⁶²

⁵⁸ As an exception, there is an agreement between the Catholic Church and the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church allowing mixed couples and their families to participate in the Holy Eucharist in the Church where their matrimony is being celebrated and also on special occasions during matrimonial life, but in this case only the couple is mentioned, not the families: cf. *Agreement Between the Catholic Church and the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church on Inter-Church Marriages*, in «Information Service» 84/III-IV (1993), p. 160; see also SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH BISHOP'S SYNOD, *Particular Laws of the Syro-Malabar Church*, in «Synodal News» 11/1 (May 2003), art. 191 § 3.3 & § 4.3. For a complete information on the situation in Kerala, see: S. MATHEW [VILLUKULAM], *Sharing in Sacraments*, (specially: Appendix II, p. 279; Appendix X, pp. 297-298 and 301, No. 19; Appendix XI, p. 302).

⁵⁹ ED 1993 Nos. 122 & 124.

⁶⁰ Apart from the above mentioned exceptions (see footnote No. 58).

⁶¹ Cf. ED 1993, No. 126.

⁶² CIC can. 908; CCEO can. 702; ED 1993, No. 104.

because in no case is there the need to concelebrate. Moreover, the only purpose of the Act is to express full communion between the concelebrants, something which in this case does not exist now, and will not happen until the Catholic and Orthodox Churches reestablish the ardently desired integrity of the links of communion, in the profession of faith, sacraments and ecclesiastical governance. «Any such concelebration would not be a valid means, and might well prove instead to be *an obstacle to the attainment of full communion*, by weakening the sense of how far we remain from this goal and by introducing or exacerbating ambiguities with regard to one or another truth of the faith.»⁶³

Anyway, «in a Catholic liturgical celebration, ministers of other Churches and ecclesial Communities may have the place and liturgical honors proper to their rank and their role, if this is judged desirable».⁶⁴ Reciprocally, «Catholic clergy invited to be present at a celebration of

another Church or ecclesial Community may wear the appropriate dress or insignia of their ecclesiastical office, if it is agreeable to their hosts.»⁶⁵ However, the risk of looking as if it were a concelebration must be avoided,⁶⁶ and, in this sense – even if it is not strictly a concelebration – it would certainly be inappropriate that a deacon (or a minor cleric) play his liturgical role during the Eucharistic celebration of a Church not in full communion with that to which he belongs. It is true that the deacon could be invited to make some specific service (proclaim the readings, etc.),⁶⁷ but not to perform his full liturgical role.

Another thing to bear in mind is that the Ecumenical Directory of 1993, No. 121,⁶⁸ establishes the prohibition of mentioning during the Eucharistic Anaphora names other than those people – living or deceased – who are in full communion with the Catholic Church. This implies that the Catholic minister is prohibited from including in the Eucharistic Prayer the memory of deceased

⁶³ JOHN PAUL II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* No. 44, cf. BENEDICT XVI, *Sacramentum caritatis* No. 56.

⁶⁴ ED 1993, No. 119.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Cf. CEI, *Vademecum*, No. 65.

⁶⁷ Cf. ED 1993, No. 126.

⁶⁸ «Public prayer for other Christians, living or dead, and for the needs and intentions of other Churches and ecclesial Communities and their spiritual heads may be offered during the litanies and other invocations of a liturgical service, but not during the Eucharistic Anaphora. Ancient Christian liturgical and ecclesiological tradition permits the specific mention in the Eucharistic Anaphora only of the names of persons who are in full communion with the Church celebrating the Eucharist» (ED 1993, No. 121).

non-Catholics, from recalling Orthodox Saints not recognized by the Catholic Church, from praying for the intentions of non-Catholic Churches, and from naming Orthodox authorities as a sign of communion with them (as, on the contrary, he must do with his own Bishop, Patriarch and Roman Pontiff). However, those prayers can be done in other liturgical moments.

Regarding the participation in the Divine Liturgy on Sunday in an Orthodox Church, the Ecumenical Directory of 1970, No. 47,⁶⁹ accepted that such participation fulfills one's Sunday obligation. But the CIC 1983 can. 1248 § 1 has changed this, because now it establishes that the Sunday obligation is fulfilled by participating in a Holy Mass "*ubicumque celebratur ritu catholico*". Therefore, by virtue of the clause on "Catholic rite" of the Mass, it is not simply enough for a Latin faithful to attend an Orthodox Divine Liturgy in order to

fulfill his Sunday obligation (apart from cases of real impossibility, in which he is therefore exempted from the obligation to attend Mass). But in the CCEO can. 881 the aforementioned clause is omitted. Consequently, for Eastern Catholics the indication of 1970's Ecumenical Directory, No. 47, could perhaps still be considered valid, that is, to accept that the Sunday obligation may be fulfilled with the participation in the Orthodox Divine Liturgy. However, in this case, the reception of the Eucharist from an Orthodox minister requires that all the conditions required by Law be observed.

It can happen that a minority Orthodox community lack its own temple or cemetery, and so ask the Catholic Bishop to permit them to use a Catholic one.⁷⁰ In Kerala there is an agreement on this matter between the Catholic Church and the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church,⁷¹ and

⁶⁹ «The Catholic faithful who, occasionally and due to the causes mentioned below in No. 50, attends the Mass of separated Eastern brothers on Sundays or days of obligation, is not obliged to attend that Mass at a Catholic Church. Rather, on those above-mentioned days it is desirable that Catholics, if prevented to hear Mass in their own Church, attend, wherever possible, the liturgy of the separated brethren» (ED 1970, No. 47. English translation is mine).

⁷⁰ Cf. CCEO can. 670 § 2; ED 1993, Nos. 137-138; PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE PASTORAL CARE OF MIGRANTS AND ITINERANT PEOPLE, Instruction *Erga migrantes Caritas Christi*, May 3, 2004, No. 56.

⁷¹ JOINT INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE MALANKARA ORTHODOX SYRIAN CHURCH, *Agreement Between the Catholic Church and the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church on the Sharing of Sacred Places*, December the 9th, 2010, (on press), quoted from MATHEW [VILLUKULAM], *Sharing in Sacraments*, Appendix VII, pp. 289-290.

also with the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church.⁷²

After so many years since Second Vatican Council, we are still only at the dawn of the discipline of "Canon Law of Ecumenism". I believe that, in places where Catholic and Orthodox live closely together, this canonical discipline is

especially necessary to ensure that their relationships proceed along those true and clear paths which will lead to the desired destination of unity, longing «for the day when we will be able to celebrate the Holy Eucharist together with all believers in Christ, and in this way to express visibly the fullness of unity that Christ willed for his disciples».⁷³

⁷² JOINT COMMISSION BETWEEN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE MALANKARA SYRIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH, *Agreement between the Catholic Church and the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church (Jacobite Syrian Christian Church) on Sharing of Sacred Places*, December the 9th, 2010, (on press), quoted from MATHEW [VILLUKULAM], *Sharing in Sacraments*, Appendix XII, pp. 303-304.

⁷³ BENEDICT XVI, *Sacramentum caritatis*, No. 56.

The Praxis of *Communicatio in sacris* in the Churches in Kerala, India

Dr. Sebastian Mathew

Introduction

The canonical issue of *communicatio in sacris* is a unique pastoral situation foreseen by the Church laws. The Canon Law stipulates that under certain exceptional circumstances the members of the Catholic Church can validly and licitly receive the sacraments of Holy Eucharist, Reconciliation, and Anointing of the Sick from the ministers of non-Catholic Eastern Churches. Similarly, members of the non-Catholic Churches may receive those sacraments from Catholic ministers as well. This issue also includes the *very exceptional* pastoral situations of the faithful of the Ecclesial Communities for the reception of the same sacraments in the Catholic Church. The pastoral aspect of this notion is generally understood as “sharing in sacraments.” This exceptional pastoral, canonical, and ecumenical notion of the commensality of sharing in the sacraments of Eucharist, Penance, and Anointing of the Sick is principally governed by the canon 844 of the 1983 *Code of Canon Law* (CIC), canon 671 of the *Code of Canons of the*

Eastern Church (CCEO), and the *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*, nn. 122-136, of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU).

The reception of the Holy Eucharist makes possible the realization of Jesus’ promise that “he who eats me will live because of me” (Jn 6:57). Through the institution of the Holy Eucharist Jesus himself has become the daily viaticum of the faithful, the pilgrims on earth. The faithful in the Catholic Church receives this Eucharistic Christ and other sacraments, the means of sanctification and salvation, ordinarily from Catholic ministers and the Catholic ministers administer them generally to the Catholics only (CIC, c. 844 §1; CCEO, c. 671 §1). From the understanding of the truth that “a fully Christian life is unthinkable without participation in the celebration of the Eucharist,”¹ the Catholic Church, based on the principles of the Second Vatican Council, has foreseen, to overcome the physical and moral difficulties to approach

¹ SACRED CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP, *Pueros Baptizatos*, n. 8, November 1, 1973, in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* (here on, AAS) 66 (1974), 30-46.

Catholic ministers, the pastoral situations in which her faithful by way of exception can receive the sacraments of Holy Eucharist, Reconciliation, and Anointing of the Sick from the ministers of those Eastern non-Catholic Churches where these sacraments are valid. These pastoral situations are reciprocal but only for the motive of fulfilling the spiritual need of the faithful. Therefore, this pastoral canonical notion cannot be used in any way as means to bringing unity among the Christians which has yet to be achieved by the guidance of the Holy Spirit through ecumenical activities².

Theological Bases and the Canonical Norms for Communicatio in Sacris

The visible unity of the One Church of God had been kept until the first division took place in the Church by the Nestorian heresy in 431. Since then heresies and schisms have brought many divisions in the One Church of Christ damaging severely its visible and perfect communion. Ever since, the divisions have always been sincere attempts to obtain again the original stage of the One Church of God, according

to the will of Christ that they may all be one. However, to receive sacraments in the Catholic Church full communion with her was necessary. So, 1917 Code of Canon Law continued the long standing canonical prohibition of any sacramental sharing with non-Catholic Christians because of their heresies and schism (Can. 731 §2).

How then sharing in sacraments is possible? This is primarily the fruit of the Second Vatican Council which defined Church as communion. In fact, the Council has changed nothing in the fundamental doctrinal teaching on the Church; rather it affirmed that the One Church of Christ *subsists*³ fully in the Catholic Church which is governed by the successor of St. Peter and by the bishops in communion with him⁴. This means that this Church of Christ *subsists* in an imperfect way in non-Catholic Eastern Churches and Ecclesial Communities "as means of salvation which derive their efficacy from the very fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Church."⁵ The elements of sanctification and truth found in the Eastern non-Catholic Churches and Ecclesial Communities, in a

² Cf. VATICAN COUNCIL II, Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio*, n. 8, November 21, 1964, in AAS 57 (1965), 90-112.

³ The term "subsist" could be understood as "the entirety of revealed truth, of sacraments, and of ministry that Christ gave for the building up of his Church and the carrying out of its mission is found within the Catholic communion of the Church". PCPCU, *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism* (here on, 1993 Ecumenical Directory), n. 17, March 25, 1993, in *Information Service* 84 (1993/II-IV), 138-142.

⁴ VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Lumen Gentium*, n. 8, November 21, 1964, in AAS 57 (1965), 5-75; cf. also, JOHN PAUL II, *Ut unum sint*, n. 11, May 25, 1995, in AAS 87 (1995), 921-982.

⁵ *Unitatis Redintegratio*, n. 3.

degree which varies from one to the other, constitute the objective basis of the communion, although imperfect, between them and, the Catholic Church⁶. Because of this communal aspect of the Churches and the Christian Communities, and because of the incorporation into the One Church of Christ through the sacrament of Baptism, the faithful are one in the Holy Spirit; they are in communion with Christ and in Him, with God the Father. This communion ecclesiology rooted in the Trinity serves as the theological basis of *communicatio in sacris*.

Eucharistic Ecclesiology as the Basis of Sacramental Sharing

Following the teachings of Vatican II, the Catechism of the Catholic Church affirms that “the Eucharist makes the Church” (CCC, n. 1396) and that it is the “source and summit of ecclesial life” (CCC, n. 1324). This brings into light the reciprocal relation between the Eucharist and the One Church of Christ, because it is in the Church that the Eucharist is instituted and the Church lives because of the Eucharist⁷. Therefore, the précis is that, as Pablo Géfaell writes, “wherever there is a Christian community that constitutionally

validly celebrates the Eucharist, there is the Church of Christ, with more or less fullness.”⁸ As Catholic Church does, the non-Catholic Eastern Churches also celebrate the Holy Mass in “genuine and total reality of the Eucharistic mystery”⁹. They also possess true sacraments and above all, by apostolic succession, the priesthood, letting themselves to be linked with the Catholic Church in closest intimacy¹⁰. These ecclesiological characters of these Churches merit them to be recognized as particular Churches by the Catholic Church and to have an ontological, though imperfect, communion with the Catholic Church. This makes sharing in sacraments possible among Catholics and separated Christians as ways of conferring the essential sacramental graces.

Why then isn’t sharing permitted in an ordinary way? In 1992, the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith sent a document to the bishops of the Catholic Church on some aspects of the Church understood as communion. That document, *Communionis Notio*, rightly puts forward that “ecclesial communion has its root and its center in the Holy Eucharist.”¹¹ Therefore, “every valid

⁶ Cf. *Ut unum sint*, n. 86.

⁷ Cf. CARD. H. DE LUBAC, *The Splendor of the Church*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 1999, 133.

⁸ P. GEFAELL, *Doctrinal Principles and Norms for Sharing in Sacramental Life*, in *Eastern Churches Journal* 3, 1 (1996), 39.

⁹ *Unitatis Redintegratio*, n. 22.

¹⁰ Cf. Ibidem, n. 15; see also, CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH (here on, CDF), *Dominus Iesus*, n. 17, August 16, 2000, in *AAS* 92 (2000), 742-765.

¹¹ CDF, *Communionis Notio*, n. 5, May 28, 1992, in *AAS* 85 (1993), 838-850.

Eucharistic celebration requires the constitutive structure of the Church as an organically structured priestly body. [...] It also presupposes the bond of communion with the proper bishop and of this bishop with his brothers in the episcopate and with its Head [the Successor of St. Peter], as a College which is the continuation of the apostolic body.¹² All the Eucharistic celebrations in the Catholic Church constitute this ecclesial communion with the Successor of St. Peter and the College of bishops through proper bishop. This important element of ecclesial communion with the Successor of St. Peter, an objective demand of the valid Eucharistic celebration¹³, is lacking subjectively in non-Catholic Eastern Churches while they celebrate the Holy Eucharist. This renders an imperfect communion of these Churches with the Catholic Church and until the fulfilment of the full communion of the Church an ordinary way of sacramental sharing is impossible, but only

by way of exception. The conditions required by the canonical norms for this exceptional sacramental sharing are (*CIC*, c. 844 §§2,3; *CCEO*, c. 671 §§ 2,3): there should exist a true necessity or a genuine spiritual advantage must suggest it; it should avoid all situations of danger of error or indifferentism; it should be physically or morally impossible to approach one's own minister. Besides these conditions the faithful of the non-Catholic Eastern Churches must be also guided by free will and proper disposition. The Catholic faithful can approach only to the minister of a Church where the above stated sacraments are valid¹⁴.

The Ecclesial Communities originated in and around the Reformation have not retained, by the loss of Apostolic Succession and the changes in the doctrine on sacraments, the fundamental ecclesial elements, such as the sacrament of the Holy Orders and valid Eucharist. This profound ecclesial difference of the Christian

¹² P. GEFAELL, *Doctrinal Principles and Norms...*, op. cit., 36.

¹³ Cf. *Communionis Notio*, n. 14.

¹⁴ The canonical provision for sacramental sharing with the eastern non-Catholic Churches also includes the faithful of the other Churches that are in the same condition in regards to the sacraments by the judgement of the Apostolic See (*CIC*, c. 844 §3; *CCEO*, c. 671 §3). The Polish National Catholic Church in the USA is the only Western Church that the Apostolic See recognizes the validity of its Eucharist. Cf. *Enchiridion Oecumenicum*, vol. 8, EDB, Bologna 2007, nn. 3339-3341. Connecticut Bishops give a statement: "The Polish National Catholic Church in the United States, separated from the Catholic Church just over 100 years ago maintains the faith of the Catholics concerning the Eucharist. ... Thus the faithful of the Polish National Catholic Church are permitted to receive holy communion in the Catholic Church by papal decree and under the same conditions as the Orthodox". Connecticut Bishops, *Who May Receive the Eucharist?*, in *Origins* 29 (1999-2000), 244.

Communities means their faithful not to have correct faith in the Eucharistic Christ. That, in turn, renders the exceptional canonical notion of *communicatio in sacris* "very exceptional" with these Christians. Consequently, Catholic Church has more strict laws for sacramental sharing with them in comparison with the laws for the Christians of Orthodox-Oriental Churches. The necessary conditions required here by the law are: there must be a situation of danger of death or other grave necessity in the judgment of the diocesan bishop or the Conference of bishops and Catholic faith in the sacrament requested must be manifested (CIC, c. 844 §4; CCEO, c. 671 §4). The other conditions must also be considered here, such as, the person must ask freely for the sacrament, be properly disposed, and cannot approach a minister of his/her own Community.

The Praxis of Communicatio in Sacris in the Churches in Kerala, India

Kerala is the home of several Eastern Churches in India. The main stream Churches in India are the Catholic Church (a communion of Latin, Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara Churches), Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church (called, Jacobite Syrian Christian Church) and Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church (also known as Indian Orthodox Church). The Assyrian Church of the East in Trichur does also come under the category of Churches as the term "Church" is understood in the teachings of the Second Vatican Council. Many Ecclesial Communities of Syrian, Anglican, Lutheran, and other Western

Reformed and Pentecostal traditions are also found in India. Most of these Christian Communities are originated as the result of missionary activities of the Protestant Communities which reached India during the period of Western Colonialism. The sincere attempts for unity among these Churches and Ecclesial Communities are always admirable. The Church of South India and the Church of North India are the fruits of some effective ecumenical efforts among the Ecclesial Communities. The Second Vatican Council has awakened a new growth in the attempts for theological discussions, pastoral, and non-pastoral collaborations among Christians in India. As a result, Catholic Church has started some important bilateral theological discussions and pastoral collaborations with Jacobite and Orthodox Churches in India, which consecutively led the Churches to create some outstanding common agreements in the area of sacramental sharing.

a) *Communicatio in Sacris* with the Jacobite Syrian Christian Church

The Jacobite Syrian Christian Church in Kerala, India, is in full canonical and visible communion with the Universal Syriac Orthodox Church with the Patriarch of Antioch and All the East as its supreme head, who resides in Damascus, Syria. The local head of the Church in Kerala is the Catholicose of India, whose office is in Puthencuriz, Ernakulam. The Catholic Church and the Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch keep a close relation since the Second Vatican Council. A historic

meeting took place on October 27, 1971 between Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Ignatius Yakob III, the supreme head of Syriac Orthodox Church, which resulted in a *Common Christological Agreement* between these two Churches¹⁵. As the relations between these two Churches deepened, Pope John Paul II of Rome and Patriarch Ignatius Zakka II of Antioch signed a *Common Declaration*, on June 23, 1984¹⁶, reaffirming solemnly the profession of common faith in the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The close ecclesial tie over the years have helped these two Churches to cooperate more pastorally at the local level in Kerala and as a result a *Joint Dialogue Commission between the Catholic Church and the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church* was set up by Pope John Paul II and Ignatius Zakka II in 1990¹⁷. The official venue for both Churches at the local level to come together for various types of dialogues and thereby to arrive at mutual agreements and common declarations among the Churches is this *Joint International Commission* which in turn becomes, in fact, the forerunner of the various pastoral collaborations between these Churches at the local level.

The Agreement on Sacramental Sharing

The canonical norm holds to the need of consulting with the authority of the interested Church or Ecclesial Community, at least with the local authority of the other party before establishing particular norms for sacramental sharing (*CIC*, c. 844 §5; *CCEO*, c. 671 §5). Accordingly, the *Common Christological Declaration* between Pope John Paul II and Patriarch Ignatius Zakka II of Antioch, in 1984, paved the way to cooperate in the area of *communicatio in sacris*, permitting the faithful to receive the sacraments of Holy Communion, Confession, and Anointing of the Sick from the legitimate ministers of the other Church during the time of physical or moral impossibility of access to one's own minister. The declaration states:

It is not rare, in fact, for our faithful to find access to a priest of their own Church materially or morally impossible. Anxious to meet their needs and with their spiritual benefit in mind, we authorize them in such [exceptional] cases to ask for the sacraments of penance, Eucharist, and anointing of the sick from lawful priests of either of our two sister Churches, when they need them.¹⁸

¹⁵ Cf. *AAS* 63 (1971), 814-815.

¹⁶ Cf. *Information Service* 55 (1984/II-III), 61-63.

¹⁷ Cf. *Information Service* 77 (1991/II), 68.

¹⁸ *Information Service* 55 (1984/II-III), 63.

This agreement is valid also for the faithful in India too. It is true that no complementary agreement has been reached yet on the local level in India, though the *Common Christological Declaration* is valid universally for all faithful of both these Churches. Moreover, the agreement on inter-Church marriages between these two Churches and the Pastoral Guidelines of PCPCU for the inter-Church marriages are established principally based on the above said *Common Christological Declaration*. This fact brings out the undisputed ground for the praxis of *communicatio in sacris* between the Catholic and Jacobite Syrian Christian Churches in India. Consequently, the inter-Church agreement and Pastoral Guidelines obviously permit a formal participation in the Holy Eucharist in either Church for the faithful:

On the occasion of these [inter-Church marriage] celebrations, the couple as well as their family members belonging to these two Churches are allowed to participate in the Holy Eucharist in the Church

where the sacrament of matrimony is celebrated.¹⁹

Thus the marriages among the faithful of these two Churches constitute a specific case to permit the application of §§2 and 3 of both *CIC*, c. 844 and *CCEO*, c. 671. However, the term “grave spiritual need” used in the introductory part of the *Agreement on Inter-Church Marriages* between the Catholic and Malankara Syrian Orthodox Churches (n. 3) may create confusion among the readers thinking ‘what is the grave spiritual need of the family members for the Eucharistic sharing in an inter-Church marriage celebration?’²⁰ Here one has to keep in mind that this agreement does not truly speak of the condition of “a grave spiritual need,” rather, both the Churches have recognized, based on the earlier agreements reached among both Churches and the universal law of the Catholic Church on *communicatio in sacris*, the genuine spiritual need of the relatives of the spouses for the Holy Communion at this particular situation, and therefore, this agreement, which is approved by both

¹⁹ *Information Service* 84 [1993/III-IV], 160-161.

²⁰ This no. 3 of the *Agreement on Inter-Church Marriages* presents the 1984 *Common Declaration* of Pope John Paul II and Patriarch Ignatius Zakka I Iwas as its one of the bases and it reads: “the possibility given by the declaration for a pastoral collaboration including the mutual admission of the faithful belonging to both Churches to the reception of the sacraments of Penance, Eucharist and Anointing of the Sick for a grave spiritual need”. *Information Service* 84 [1993/III-IV], 159.

Church authorities – Rome and Patriarch²¹ – as well as the pastoral guidelines issued by PCPCU, rightly provide the Eucharistic sharing for the family members too (the real spirit of this particular norm can allow the friends and other invited also for the Eucharist). Neither the universal law of the Catholic Church nor the previous agreements reached among these two Churches do speak of a “grave spiritual need” as a condition for Eucharistic sharing among members of both the Churches, if not of a “true spiritual advantage.” Therefore, as this agreement clearly rules for the Eucharistic sharing taking into consideration of the inter-Church marriage as a genuine spiritual need, to evade confusion it would have been better to avoid using the term “grave spiritual need” from its introductory part which is not really said either in the universal norm nor in the 1984 agreement between the Pope and the Patriarch for sacramental sharing.

b) *Communicatio in Sacris* between the Catholic and the Orthodox Churches

Moran Mar Baselius Marthoma Mathews I, the Catholicos and Supreme Head of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, whose *Throne* is in Devalokam, Kottayam, Kerala, paid a visit to Pope John Paul II, the Supreme Head of the Catholic Church, on June 1983, in Rome. At this time the Catholicos expressed the desire for the creation of a dialogue commission between his Church and the Catholic Church. During his visit to India in 1986, Pope John Paul II also met Moran Mar Baselios Marthoma Mathew I, at Kottayam. These visits along with the earnest desire and sincere search for communion among the Churches brought about the creation of the *Joint Commission for Dialogue between the Catholic and the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church* with a proclaimed twofold purpose: promoting full communion of faith and sacramental life

²¹ On clarifying some doubts on the Joint Agreement on the inter-Church Marriages, Msg. P. Duprey, Secretary of PCPCU, in an unpublished letter sent to the President of Kerala Catholic Bishops' Conference, Archbishop Joseph Powathil, on December 10, 1993, reaffirms the possibility of Eucharistic sharing in the exceptional situation of the celebration of the inter-Church marriages and for the couple on special occasions: “What is new for Catholic, in relation to the Canon Law at present in force, is the permission granted to Syrian Orthodox faithful to participate in the Catholic Eucharist during the celebration of marriage and to the couple who may continue to receive the Eucharist in both Churches on special occasions. This novelty for Catholics is based upon the agreement between Pope John Paul II and Patriarch Zakka I Iwas in 1984. The perspectives on this point are widened and this widening is approved by Rome and by the Patriarch”. Cf. S. MATHEW, *Sharing in Sacraments: the doctrine of the Catholic Church with a juridical and theological view on its praxis in Christian Kerala*, Doctoral Thesis, Holy Cross Pontifical University, Canon Law Faculty, Rome 2011, 302 (Appendix XI).

between the two Churches and seeking a solution to various pastoral problems which are currently a cause of difficulty between the two communities.²²

In the first meeting itself, held at Sophia Centre, Kottayam, Kerala, from 22 to 25 October 1989, a *Christological Declaration* was signed with their common belief in One Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, perfect God and perfect Man. This approved doctrinal agreement by the authorities of both Churches was made public on June 3, 1990²³. This put an end to any Christological disagreement between the Catholic and Malankara Orthodox Syrian Churches. Since then, the Joint International Commission has been meeting every year alternately hosted by the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church and the Catholic Church.

The Issue of Eucharistic Sharing

The 1996 meeting of the Joint Commission tried to propose a solution to the pastoral issue of sacramental sharing between these two Churches. To this regard, a Joint Report on the Dimensions of Eucharistic Communion was produced treating mainly the concept of the communion of Churches and stating that communion is accomplished fully in the Eucharistic reality only.²⁴

The Report has only one statement regarding the pastoral issue of Eucharistic sharing: "Oneness of faith is the prerequisite for the communion between the Churches. However, for the Orthodox Church, in extreme instances 'economic inter-communion' is dispensed at the discretion of the local bishop. For the Catholic tradition, the admission of the faithful of other Churches to the Eucharist is allowed in certain instances of pastoral need."²⁵ Even if the Report did not suggest any concrete mutual pastoral solution to the issue of the sacramental sharing, the above mentioned statement of the Report shows a possible *economic-recognition* of the Catholic practice of the *communicatio in sacris* from the part of the Orthodox Church. Therefore, a mutual sacramental sharing, especially the administration of the Holy Communion could be taken for granted, without being contrary to the principles and doctrines of the ecclesial communion of both Churches, for the spiritual good of the faithful in extreme situations of physical and moral impossibility of accession to one's own minister.

The Provision for Sharing in the Anointing of the Sick

The importance of the pastoral need to meet the spiritual needs of the

²² Cf. *Information Service* 72 (1990/I), 2-3.

²³ Cf. *Ibidem* 73 (1990/II), 39.

²⁴ Cf. X. KOODAPUZHA - J. PANICKER (eds.), *Joint International Commission for dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church: Papers and Joint Statements 1989-2000*, Wigi Printers, Kottayam 2001, 416-417.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, 417.

faithful, especially of the sick, was recognized in the 2009 meeting of the Joint Commission. The meeting succeeded in drawing up an agreement for exceptional cases of Anointing of the Sick. The Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church on the basis of the principle of *pastoral oeconomia* agreed that the pastoral cooperation between the Catholic and Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church for the administration of the Anointing of the sick is possible in exceptional situations²⁶. Subsequently, the latest Meeting of the Joint Commission held at Spirituality Centre, Kottayam, on December 8-9, 2010, has issued the Proposed Statement on sharing of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. Number two of the Statement affirms: "..., we agree that, in the event of an emergency and in the absence of the celebrant of one Church, the faithful can approach the minister of the other Church to receive the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, who may administer the sacrament in his own liturgical rite."²⁷ A possible approval of the proposed provision by the competent Church authority is hopefully awaited.

The Pastoral Issue of Inter-Church Marriages

Inter-Church marriages were taking place often between the faithful of the Catholic and Malankara Jacobite Churches in Kerala until a certain period in the past. As Mar Kuriakose Kunnacherry, the Archbishop emeritus of the Kottayam Archdiocese, writes, "During the time of separation and during the years that followed marriages between Jacobites and Catholics were taking place indiscriminately, but as hierarchies were established for the Jacobites and Catholics separately mixed marriages also disappeared."²⁸ Ever since then the inter-Church marriage had become a severe pastoral issue and remained unresolved. This pastoral situation of the Christian faithful in Kerala has become a major concern for the Joint International Commissions for Dialogue. From its first meeting, the Commission tried to put forward some pastoral remedies²⁹.

This rising inter-ecclesial family situation in Kerala demonstrated the need for an agreement between Church

²⁶ Cf. *Information Service* 133 (2010/I), 23-24.

²⁷ JOINT COMMISSION FOR DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE MALANKARA ORTHODOX SYRIAN CHURCH, *Proposed Statement on Sharing of the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick between the Catholic Church and the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church*, December 7, 2010. For the document see, S. MATHEW, *Sharing in Sacraments...*, Op cit., 283-284 (Appendix IV).

²⁸ MAR K. KUNNACHERRY, *Marriages between the Faithful of the Catholic Church and the Syrian Orthodox Church*, in X. KOODAPUZHA - J. PANICKER, *Joint International Commission for dialogue...*, op. cit., 42.

²⁹ Cf. *Information Service* 72 (1990/I), 3.

authorities in providing spiritual care to their faithful in such pastoral needs. The urgency of problems of such a pastoral nature induced the Joint Dialogue Commission of the Catholic Church and the Jacobite Syrian Christian Church, in the meeting held in December 1991, to examine the question of inter-Church marriages between the faithful of these Churches. They eventually arrived at an Agreement on the inter-Church marriages. That agreement has been definitively approved by the authorities of both Churches³⁰. This norm accepted the pastoral reality of the inter-Church marriages:

Our two Churches desire to foster marriages within the same ecclesial communion and consider this the norm. However, we have to accept the pastoral reality that inter-Church marriages do take place. When such occasions arise, both Churches should facilitate the celebration of the sacrament of matrimony in either Church, allowing the bride/

bridegroom the right and freedom to retain her/his own ecclesial communion, by providing necessary information and documents.³¹

Concerning the pastoral care of these inter-Church families, the *Pastoral Guidelines* of PCPCU suggests that each partner “attend the liturgical celebrations of his/her respective Church, but the couple may be allowed to participate jointly in the Eucharistic celebration on special occasions when this joint participation is socially required” (n. 23).

Now through this joint agreement, the provision of the Codes (CIC, cc. 1124-1129; CCEO, cc. 813-816) and the 1993 *Ecumenical Directory* (nn. 143-160) for mixed marriages is being applied for the marriages between the Catholic Church and Jacobite Syrian Christian Church in India. This is a remarkable pastoral and exemplary ecumenical movement among the Churches in India as this agreement effectively puts an end to the real pastoral

³⁰ Cf. *Ibidem* 84 (1993/III-IV), 159. The Malayalam translation of the “*Agreement between the Catholic Church and the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church on Inter-Church marriages*” was published on December 7th, 2010, with the title, *Katholica-yakkobaya-orthodox sabha angangalude sabhaanthara vivagha udambadiyum anubhandha reghakalum*.

³¹ *Information Service* 84 (1993/III-IV), 160. The Syro-Malabar Bishops’ Synod has decided to follow these Pastoral Guidelines as its Particular Laws for the inter-Church marriages between Syrian Catholics and Jacobites. The Art. 191 - §1 reads: “For marriages between members of the Catholic Church and the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church, the pastoral guidelines agreed upon by these two Churches are to be followed”. SYRO-MALABAR CHURCH BISHOPS’ SYNOD, *Particular Laws of the Syro-Malabar Church*, in *Synodal News, Bulletin of the Syro-Malabar Major Archiepiscopal Church* 11, 1 (May 2003), 45.

problem of mixed-marriages and, besides, keeps both Churches closer than ever.

However, until now a similar agreement has not been reached from the discussions between the Catholic Church and the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church in Kerala except some good attempts in the international meetings. The joint statements on the inter-Church marriages made so far were not acceptable to the authorities of both the Churches³². Nevertheless, the long process of discussions ever since the origin of this Joint International Commission is hopefully heading toward a possible agreement on the inter-Church marriages between the Catholic and Malankara Orthodox Syrian faithful. After considering all the suggestions and proposals of the competent Church authorities, the 20th Meeting of the Joint Commission, held at Kottayam, on December 2010, has issued a new *Proposed Statement on Inter Church Marriages*³³. The approval of this Proposed Statement could assertively fetch a canonical solution for the most important pastoral issue of the inter-Church marriages among the faithful of Catholic and Malankara Syrian Orthodox Churches in Kerala and the diaspora.

Other Areas of Pastoral Collaborations

The difficulty in always finding a priest of the same Church, or a cemetery of one's own Church for funerals or a sacred place for divine worship, is growing nowadays. The canonical norm, CCEO, c. 670, asks the diocesan bishops to make provisions according to the particular laws of each Church *sui iuris* for the use of Catholic buildings, cemeteries, and chapels by non-Catholic Christians for divine worship. Accordingly, the Syro-Malabar Church permits the same use, with the consent of the eparchial bishop, to the members of other Episcopal Churches on the condition that dangers of error, indifferentism or scandal are avoided³⁴. The particular law (art. 132 §2), also provides for the use of cemeteries by other Christians in case of urgent need with the permission of the eparchial bishop. The CIC does not speak anything concerning the matter, but the 1993 *Ecumenical Directory*, n. 137, foresees similar circumstances and suggests the diocesan bishops might permit such use.

However, there hadn't been any agreement among the Churches in India regarding the pastoral issue until 2010. The bilateral Commissions; Catholic-Jacobite

³² For details cf. *Information Service* 77 (1991/II), 103-105; Ibidem 96 (1997/IV), 140; Ibidem 99 (1998/IV), 219; Ibidem 105 (2000/IV), 193; Ibidem 111 (2002/IV), 227; Ibidem 114 (2003/IV), 196; Ibidem 77 (1991/II), 105.

³³ Cf. JOINT INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE MALANKARA ORTHODOX CHURCH, *Proposed Statement on Inter-Church Marriages*, December 9, 2010. For the document see, S. MATHEW, *Sharing in Sacraments...*, Op cit., 285-287 (Appendix V).

³⁴ Cf. *Particular Laws of the Syro-Malabar Church*, n. Art. 132 § 1.

and Catholic-Orthodox, have accepted this problem as a real pastoral issue in India, especially for the faithful in diaspora. Therefore, they discussed what could be done about the possibility of sharing of sacred places, liturgical objects and cemeteries. Both Commissions have drafted separate documents on sharing of sacred places, especially churches and cemeteries, and have submitted them before respective Church authorities for approval³⁵. Consequently, after the meetings of the Joint Commissions held at Kottayam, on December 2010, an *Agreement between the Catholic Church and the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church (Jacobite Syrian Christian Church) on Sharing of Sacred Places*³⁶ and an *Agreement Between the Catholic Church and the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church on the Sharing of Sacred Places*³⁷ was published. With regard to the funeral services, these agreements not only provide norms for the exchange of cemeteries and liturgical objects but also entitle the minister of the Church to officiate the funeral ceremony, using his

own liturgical texts and vestments, when a minister of the Church of the deceased person is not available (Catholic-Jacobite Agreement, n. 2.1; Catholic-Orthodox Agreement, n. 6). These agreements stand out as milestones in the area of pastoral collaboration between the Churches in India.

Conclusion

I would like to conclude the article considering the possibilities of the praxis of *communicatio in sacris* with other Christians in India, especially with the Assyrian Church of the East in Trichur, Kerala. The Assyrian Church of the East in Trichur, which is originated by division from the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church, is in full communion with the Universal Assyrian Church of the East, whose supreme head is the Catholicos-Patriarch. A *Common Christological Declaration* has been signed by Mar Dinkha IV, the Patriarch of the Assyrian Church, and Pope John Paul II in 1994 leaving more room for ecumenical activities and creating

³⁵ Cf. *Information Service* 133 (2010/I), 23.

³⁶ Cf. JOINT COMMISSION FOR DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE MALANKARA SYRIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH, *Agreement between the Catholic Church and the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church (Jacobite Syrian Christian Church) on Sharing of Sacred Places*, December 9, 2010. For the document see, S. MATHEW, *Sharing in Sacraments...*, Op cit., 303-304 (Appendix XII).

³⁷ Cf. JOINT INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE MALANKARA ORTHODOX SYRIAN CHURCH, *Agreement between the Catholic Church and the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church on the Sharing of Sacred Places*, December 9, 2010. For the document see, S. MATHEW, *Sharing in Sacraments...*, Op cit., 289-290 (Appendix VII).

the *Joint Committee for Theological Dialogue* between Catholic and Assyrian Churches³⁸. After studying the request for sacramental sharing in this Joint Committee, in 2001, the PCPCU has promulgated the provision and the guidelines for admission to the Eucharist between the Chaldean Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East facilitating a normal sacramental life for their faithful according to their own tradition in their motherland and in the diaspora, where practicing Christian life has become a distress³⁹. However, this canonical provision is not intended to be used between the Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East in India. No similar provision or any practical implementation of *communicatio in sacris* has been established in the Kerala Context. Nonetheless, the current canonical provision for the sacramental sharing is in vigour to meet the individual exceptional cases between the Catholic and Assyrian Churches in India.

Various Ecclesial Communities of almost all Reformed Traditions of the West and East have also their considerable presence in India. The pastoral collaboration of the Catholic Church with these Communities in the area of sacramental sharing is a question of great difficulty since there are clear doctrinal and

theological differences mainly regarding the sacrament of Eucharist and Sacred Orders. The lack of valid Eucharist in these Communities renders "very exceptional" the praxis of *communicatio in sacris* with these Christians. The agreement of one's faith with belonging to a Church or an Ecclesial Community is an important matter of sincerity to oneself and to the ethics of ecumenism. To state it clearly, one cannot belong faithfully to a Protestant Community and have a Catholic faith in the Holy Eucharist. Therefore, all the circumstances of sacramental sharing with the faithful of Ecclesial Communities are treated as "very exceptional" limiting its practices only to the situations of danger of death and the grave necessities in the judgment of the diocesan bishop or the Conference of bishops.

The Church is conscious about the painful/sorrowful situation of these our brothers and sisters, especially of the non-Catholic non-Orthodox Christians, who cannot receive the sacraments in the Catholic Church apart from the very exceptional situations foreseen in the Church laws for the sake of their eternal salvation. This particular impossibility still prevails not because personal guilt is attributed to them but due to the substantial discrepancy between the sacramental doctrine of the Communities to which they

³⁸ Cf. *L'Osservatore Romano*, English edition, 16 November 1994, 4; *Information Service* 90 (1995/IV), 140-141.

³⁹ Cf. *AAS* 87 (1995), 685-687; *Information Service* 88 (1995/I), 2-3.

belong and that of the Catholic Church. Therefore, the Church requests its pastors to be particularly benevolent to the non-Catholic Christians who ask the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, even when the sacramental sharing is impossible with them. Our hope is that, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit and in accordance to the revealed truths, one day, all Christians will be able to share together the unbloody sacrifice of Calvary in a *visible* ecclesial communion. Until then, the pastors have to announce with the same hope, kindness, and deep pastoral love for other Christians like Jesus has for all his followers, the truth that – as Pope Benedict XVI exhorts – “The Eucharist in fact not only manifests our personal communion with Jesus Christ, but also implies full *communio* with the Church. This is the reason why, sadly, but not without hope, we ask Christians who are not Catholic to understand and respect our conviction, which is grounded in the Bible and Tradition.”⁴⁰

The bilateral theological and pastoral dialogues that take place on the local level under the auspices of the Joint International Commissions between Catholic Church and Jacobite and Orthodox Churches in India are landmarks in its efforts not just to meet the pastoral requirements but to strive for the perfect unity of the Churches as well. The works of the Joint Commissions have been a great help in the spiritual life of the faithful. They have made room for pastoral collaboration between Catholic and non-Catholic Eastern Churches in India, within the sphere of established canonical norms of sacramental sharing. Yet, much has to be done in this area. The achievements and fruits should also lead to a possible ground for a multilateral dialogue between the Churches for greater pastoral collaborations. This is a need of the time, a need for the spiritual wellbeing of the Christian faithful of the country. May it ultimately lead to a fruitful common witness to Christ that India awaits.

⁴⁰ BENEDICT XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, n. 56, February 22, 2007, in *AAS* 99 (2007), 105-180.

Catholicity of the Church

Explanations and Interpretations in the Light of Lumen Gentium

Dr. Thomas Puthukulangara

PART - II

2. The Church as the New People of God

The Church as the people of God of the new covenant is the typical ecclesiological outline of the Vatican II. As we have seen, the title people of God signifies the universality of the salvific project of God. In J. Markey's opinion, "The people of God' serves as a rich metaphor for the *universal* and *sacramental* character of the Church's communal and 'spiritual' dimension. It allows the Church of Christ to be described in a wider scope than the narrow confines of a particular institutional structure, while at the same time insuring that this community has a concrete and historical character that protects it from becoming a merely intangible and a historical conception"³¹. It can give more openness and mobility to the Church. It underlines the unity of the salvation history which embraces everyone and everything, starting with the Israel until

the Church³². It can also express both the equality of believers as far as their Christian existence is concerned and their inequality as far as function and organization is concerned³³.

2.1. Universality of the People of God of the Old Testament

Whatever may be said about the foreshadowing of the Church before the call of Abraham, the covenant that God made with the patriarch marked the origin of that chosen people to whom the Church of Christ would always refer as her figure and preparation³⁴. Yahweh chose Israel as his very own, on whom he promised to lavish extraordinary blessings provided they remain faithful to him. Step by step, he taught and prepared the children of Abraham by sending them prophets to reveal himself and the decrees of his will, in order to make them holy. This special vocation of the chosen people was destined to reach all the nations so that all may be

³¹ J. MARKEY, *Creating Communion*, 62.

³² Cf. E. MALNATI, *La Chiesa: sviluppo storico dell'ecclesiologia*, Piemme, Casale Monferrato 1998, 213-215.

³³ Cf. H. RIKHOF, *The Concept of the Church*, Sheed and Ward, London 1981, 41.

³⁴ Cf. LG 9/1.

brought to adore the true God. Two obvious ideas to be noted here are the very intimate and spiritual union of this people with God, maintaining their social religious background and the idea of universality. That means all are invited to know God; all are called to accept him with love and are attracted to stick to him unconditionally. All these are nothing other than a preparation for the new and eternal covenant, the fullness of Revelation. Thus finally he sent his Son and his Spirit to bring the whole universe in communion with him; the universality is inaugurated by fact in the New Testament. In her historical reality and theological mystery, the Church comes from the people of God of the old covenant.

2.2. Pre-figuration of the Church in the Old Testament People

The Vatican II teaches that the main purpose of all that happened to the Old Testament people was to “prepare for and declare in prophecy the coming of Christ, redeemer of all men, and of the messianic kingdom” (*DV* 15)³⁵. The Council says, “God, however, does not make men holy and save them merely as individuals, without bond or link between one another. Rather has it pleased him to bring men together as one people, a people which acknowledges him in truth and serves him in holiness” (*LG* 9/1). This plan of God began with the call of Abraham and the promise given to

him³⁶. The fulfilment of this promise took place in different stages such as the election of Israel and the covenant made with them. And “all these things, however, were done by way of preparation and as a figure of that new and perfect covenant, which was to be ratified in Christ, and of that fuller revelation which was to be given through the Word of God himself made flesh” (*LG* 9/1).

2.3. Novelty of this People with Respect to the Old One

What makes up the *new* people of God is the Trinitarian relations. “The universal Church is seen to be ‘a people made one with the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit’” (*LG* 4). That is, as we have seen, the Church is above all a mystery rooted in the triune God. It is in relationship with the Holy Trinity, the eternal source from which she arises, that the Church is seen to be a people. From the beginning onwards the Church was conscious of the continuity and at the same time, the newness of her own reality as the *new* people of God.

The Council summons up that the newness is ‘Christ’ himself. This ‘messianic people’ has the following characteristics: it is the body of Christ and it has Christ as its head, it has the dignity and freedom of the sons of God, its law is the new commandment of love, and it has its final destiny, the kingdom of God³⁷. It shares

³⁵ Cf. *LG* 55.

³⁶ Cf. Gen 12:1-2; 15:8, 17:1-4.

³⁷ Cf. *LG* 9/2.

the priesthood of Christ³⁸. By means of this common priesthood all Christians are called to participate in Christ's mission for the world and to take an active share in it. This holy people of God is given the supernatural appreciation of faith (*sensus fidei*) and is adorned with charisms and extraordinary gifts³⁹.

In the Old Testament, the chosen people was limited to a single nation. The *new* people of God goes beyond this limitation. Even though it does not explicitly include all men⁴⁰, and at times may look like a small flock, is nonetheless a lasting and sure seed of unity, hope and salvation for the whole human race⁴¹. It has a universal character; it is catholic. As the Council says, "Christ instituted this new covenant, the new testament, that is to say, in his blood, calling together a people made up of Jews and Gentiles, making them one, not according to the flesh but in the Spirit. This was to be the new people of God" (LG 9/1)⁴².

The basis of this newness - universalism - is the redemption accomplished by Christ for all. So in virtue of it she transcends all limits of time and

confines of race and is destined to extend to all regions of the earth and so enters into the history of mankind⁴³. The Council retains that, "This people is to be spread throughout the whole world and to all ages in order that the design of God's will may be fulfilled" (LG 13/1).

So according to the Council this *new* people of God enjoys catholicity described in three ways: as a germ of unity, of hope and of salvation; as a community of life, of love and of truth; as an instrument of redemption, of illumination, of purification and is sent forth into the whole world. All these elements that have appeared in the first chapter regarding the mystery of the Church here we find again in an impressing synthesis.

2.4. Church: The New People of God is Catholic and Universal

We have seen that the *new* people of God is destined to embrace the whole world and the entire humanity is called to belong to it. The very reason for this call is nothing other than the eternal plan of God that all should be saved. Therefore the Church, the *new* people of God which acts as the

³⁸ Cf. Heb 5:1-5; Rev 1:6, 5:9-10; 1 Pt 2:4-10. See also LG 10/2.

³⁹ Cf. LG 12.

⁴⁰ Implicitly the new people of God is 'present in all nations of the world'. Cf. LG 13/2.

⁴¹ Cf. LG 9/2.

⁴² Cf. B. KLOPPENBURG, *The Ecclesiology of Vatican II*, Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago 1974, 43.

⁴³ Cf. LG 9/3.

instrument of salvation for the entire world has given the quality of catholicity and universality⁴⁴.

The Church is explicitly presented to the world in the day of the Pentecost at the presence of a huge crowd, of different races, of different customs, of different languages, which followed the discourse of St. Peter and is united to the same faith by means of the same baptism⁴⁵. Writes E. Zoghby, "It is in such a situation of universality that God wanted to present his Church and it is in this same situation that he wanted to see the Church lives. This is just because God wills that the Church must receive all the peoples' equally"⁴⁶.

Nothing should hamper the Church from reaching all the peoples, the languages, the colours, the races, etc. J. Ratzinger remarks that, "At the beginning the Church is generated in the Twelve by the one Spirit for all peoples, hence even from the first moment, she is directed to being in all cultures, and thus to being the one 'People

of God': she is not a local community that grows gradually but the leaven that is always destined to permeate the whole and, consequently, embodies universality from the first instant"⁴⁷.

The diversity of colour, race or language, are not sufficient to make the Church catholic and universal. In order to be the Church of Christ she should not only make the people her own but also at the same time she should become their own. People must find in her a transfiguration of their human patrimony such as their civilization, their tradition, which constitutes their soul, and all these must be integrated into the new life. The ancient Christianity, apostolic or almost apostolic, must be considered under the same title and rank; that means, its Christian patrimony, its legitimate religious traditions, tied up to its national traditions and to its human civilization, must be integrated into the Church with the same rights, without any racial discrimination or any social

⁴⁴ In the Council's teachings it is not explicitly clear whether catholicity and universality denote one and the same reality. A first impression one gets is that, in *Lumen gentium*, especially in the thirteenth article, the meaning of universality and catholicity are explicitly equalized. In the thesis we don't use these terms as synonyms. Universality is one of the essential elements of catholicity. But it seems that the Council wanted to overcome the limits of the term universality by using it as a synonym to the term catholicity. For, in the past times the concept of universality is limited to the geographical extension of the Church. Thus for *Lumen gentium* catholicity is the character of recapitulative universality in all its extents. Cf. E. LANNE, *Cattolicità*, in GAROFALO S. (a cura di), *Dizionario del concilio ecumenico Vaticano II*, Unione Editoriale Roma, Roma 1969, 698.

⁴⁵ Cf. Acts 2:5-11.

⁴⁶ E. ZOGHBY, *Unità e diversità della Chiesa*, in G. BARAÚNA (a cura di), *La Chiesa del Vaticano II: studi e commenti intorno alla costituzione dogmatica Lumen gentium*, Vallecchi Editore Firenze, Firenze 1965, 528.

⁴⁷ J. RATZINGER, *The Ecclesiology of the Constitution on the Church: Lumen Gentium*, 94.

conditions or of the number of the faithful⁴⁸. In this context it is important to note the different ecclesial traditions, especially in the eastern traditions, present in the Church.

The Council declares that, just because “she is not of this world” (*LG* 13/2) the Church can receive in herself all the richness of values, the customs and traditions of the humanity. The three verbs which qualify such an action of the Church are purify, strengthen and elevate⁴⁹. No one is a stranger to the Church. The question remains is how the Church does it? Before treating those who are outside, the Church should deal with the realization of catholicity in her own members and for the improvement of her internal unity in diversity. The last five articles of the second chapter *The People of God* of *Lumen gentium* and the seventeenth article of *Unitatis redintegratio* deal with the property of catholicity and its realization⁵⁰.

3. The Church as Universal Sacrament of Salvation

J. Markey comments that, “The notion of sacrament and sacramentality acts

as a leitmotif running through all the documents, and they expand it beyond its reference to liturgy and sacraments (in a strict sense) to include the very mission of the Church and the call to Christian discipleship”⁵¹. Through the action of Christ’s Spirit, the Church embodies and continues Christ’s mission throughout the world. The Church, therefore, exists as a sacramental sign of the kingdom of God. In the economy of salvation the Church is both instrument and fruit. It is because of this reason that the Church is defined as the universal sacrament of salvation. “The presence of the word ‘universal’ suggests that we are dealing with an aspect of the catholicity of the Church”⁵².

3.1. The Notion of ‘Sacrament’ Applied to the Church

Three important documents of the Vatican II, namely, *Lumen gentium*, *Gaudium et spes* and *Unitatis redintegratio*, develop the notion of the Church as universal sacrament of salvation⁵³. According to L. Scheffczyk the term ‘sacrament’ is the “most significant and

⁴⁸ Cf. E. ZOGHBY, *Unità e diversità della Chiesa*, 528.

⁴⁹ Cf. *LG* 13/2.

⁵⁰ The thirteenth article as we are analyzing provides a brief theology of catholicity, and the following articles spell out the ways how the various categories of people are related to the Church. Thus the article fourteen is about the Catholics, the fifteenth one speaks of other Christians and the sixteenth treats those who are not Christians. The seventeenth article deals with the actualization of Christ’s mandate or the actualization of the gift of catholicity by the missionary activities of the Church. The seventeenth article of *UR* illustrates the ecumenical approach of the pluralism within the Church. Cf. F. SULLIVAN, *The Church We Believe In*, 87-95.

⁵¹ J. MARKEY, *Creating Communion*, 97; see also page 148.

⁵² F. SULLIVAN, *The Church We Believe In*, 110.

⁵³ Cf. *LG* 1, 9, 48, 49; *AG* 1, 5; *GS* 45; *SC* 5, 26.

expressive concept for the ‘mystery character’ of the Church”, which “makes accessible and includes many other characterizations of the Church”⁵⁴. The concept of sacrament applied to the Church emphasizes that the Church herself is, in her own way a visible sign of invisible grace. That means the Church signifies and at the same time helps to bring about the salvation of everyone who is saved.

From the very beginning of *Lumen gentium* the sacramental nature of the Church is highly emphasized. We read, “The Church is in Christ like a sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race” (*LG* 1). The explanation of this sacramentality which the Council attributes to the Church must be sought in the context of *mystery*. Pope John Paul II teaches that, “The Church is a divine mystery because the divine design for the humanity’s salvation is realized in her, namely, the mystery of the kingdom of God revealed in the word and very life of Christ”⁵⁵.

In M. H. Heim’s words, “Because this salvation is found only in Christ, however, the Church is sacrament precisely by the fact that Christ is present in her throughout history. *Lumen gentium* defines this

presence as a sacramental presence”⁵⁶. J. Markey remarks that, “The Church acts as a vibrant and life-giving sign of Jesus Christ’s ongoing presence and offer of salvation to the world”⁵⁷. Therefore the Church, remains as a sign of hope, which on the one hand effectively testifies the presence of God and on the other hand acknowledges her own provisional nature so as to be for all mankind the forerunner of the Lord who is to come again, is part and parcel of the description of her as the universal sacrament of salvation.

The sacramental vision of the Church highlights in particular two aspects: the Church’s dependence on Christ and her salvific role with respect to the world that she is called to be the sign and instrument of salvation. We read, “God gathered together as one all those who in faith look upon Jesus as the author of salvation and the source of unity and peace, and established them as the Church that for each and all she may be the visible sacrament of this saving unity” (*LG* 9/3). According to J. L. Witte, “To express the salvific action of Christ through the Holy Spirit in the Church, the Council has selected the word ‘sacrament’, in the formula ‘sacrament of unity’”⁵⁸.

⁵⁴ L. SCHEFFCZYK, *Aspekte der Kirche in der Krise: um die Entscheidung für das authentische Konzil*, *Quaestiones non disputatae I*, F. Schmitt, Siegburg 1993, 24.

⁵⁵ JOHN PAUL II, General Audience, *La Chiesa, mistero e sacramento*, 27.11.1991, in *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, XIV, 2, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano 1993, 1280.

⁵⁶ M. H. HEIM, *Joseph Ratzinger: Life in the Church and Living Theology*, 59.

⁵⁷ J. MARKEY, *Creating Communion*, 154.

⁵⁸ J. L. WITTE, *La Chiesa “sacramentum unitatis”*, in BARAÚNA G. (a cura di), *La Chiesa del Vaticano II*, 495.

3.2. The Church as the Instrument of Salvation: Sign of her Catholicity

How the Church functions as the instrument of salvation for all? The Council says, “[The Church] is to be spread throughout the whole world and to all ages in order that the design of God’s will may be fulfilled... that all his children who were scattered should be finally gathered together as one” (*LG* 13/1). The Church should actually involve in bringing about salvation of everyone who is saved. *Lumen gentium* implies such a universal instrumental role for the Church in God’s salvation design when it says, “The one mediator, Christ, established and ever sustains here on earth his holy Church, the community of faith, hope and charity, as visible organization through which he communicates truth and grace to all men” (*LG* 8/1).

Still remains the question how it works? The Council proposes an analogy between the mystery of the Church and the mystery of the Incarnate Word. “As the assumed nature, inseparably united to him, serves the divine Word as a living organ of salvation, so, in a somewhat similar way, does the social structure of the Church serve the Spirit of Christ who vivifies it, in the building up of the body” (*LG* 8/1).

Writes J. L Witte, “*In and through the visible preaching, administration of sacraments and leadership in the Church is the invisible ‘fullness of grace and truth’ manifested and given to the faithful*”⁵⁹. Therefore the Church is the channel or the medium through which the salvation is given. F. Sullivan explains that, “The new aspect of catholicity that is expressed when the Church is described as ‘universal sacrament of salvation’ is that all grace of salvation is not only ordered *toward* the Church, but in some way comes *from* and *through* the Church”⁶⁰.

It is because the Church possesses the fullness of revealed truths and the whole richness of the means of salvation. The Council declares that, “The Church is in Christ like a sacrament or as a sign and instrument” (*LG* 1). On the basis of Pauline and post-Pauline writings M. Heim asserts that, “Paul proclaims Christ as the one and only eschatological sign of God’s salvation for mankind. In Christ, God’s eternal plan of redemption is realized once and for all. The recipient of this salvific mystery is the Church, the communion of those who have been called and sanctified by God”⁶¹. Thus it is clear that there is no salvation without the grace of Christ and that every offer of grace is intrinsically directed toward the

⁵⁹ J. L. WITTE, *One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic*, in H. VORGRIMLER (ed.), *One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic: Studies in the Nature and Role of the Church in the Modern World*, Sheed & Ward, London 1968, 17.

⁶⁰ F. SULLIVAN, *The Church We Believe In*, 110.

⁶¹ M. H. HEIM, *Joseph Ratzinger: Life in the Church and Living Theology*, 40.

Church. Hence the catholicity of the Church consists in the fact that the universal offer of salvation involves a relationship to the Church from the part of every human individual. Everyone, without any exception, is placed in some relationship to the Church. In this sense one can say that the Church is truly catholic, which means 'according to the whole'.

3.3. The Necessity of the Church for Salvation

If salvation is "communion with God and unity among all men" (LG 1) then the ecclesial dimension of salvation cannot be considered as a secondary aspect. It has its preliminary germ in the unity of origin and destination of the entire human family. The Council accentuates that, "The Church, a pilgrim now on earth, is necessary for salvation" (LG 14/1). The Church exists in the will of God as a part of the divine economy of salvation. Following the logic of the Council we find that she is a part of the universal salvific plan of God. "At all times and in every race, anyone who fears God and does what is right has been acceptable to him (cf. Acts 10:35)" (LG 9/1). God the Saviour wills that all men to be saved. The historical manner and nature of this salvation is explained by the Council in the following way. "He [God] has,

however, willed to make men holy and save them, not as individuals without any bond or link between them, but rather to make them into a people, who might acknowledge him and serve him in holiness" (LG 9/1)⁶². All men belong to this new people of God or are related to it⁶³. Therefore it can be stated that the Church represents the universal means through which salvation is indicated and realized and it is the whole community which manifests and promotes the saving design of God⁶⁴.

When the Church is defined as the sacrament of unity the accent is given to the sacramental character of the Church and to its consequence, that is, her objective to bring back to unity the world in which she is engaged. J. L. Witte comments that, "Nevertheless, such a paradox seems to constitute a true property of the Catholic Church. In fact the term 'catholicity' contemporarily refers to two realities. In the first place it denotes the fullness of grace, which specifies that part of the humanity which is already reunited under its Lord, Christ. It manifests the other characteristics of the Church, which is her relationship with the entire world. Through the continuous witnessing of the death and resurrection of Christ, especially in the Eucharistic action, the Church aspires to insert the entire humanity and thus reunites them in the unity of her head"⁶⁵.

⁶² See also GS 32.

⁶³ Cf. LG 13/4.

⁶⁴ Cf. C. O'NEILL, *The Mystery of the Church*, in A. FLANNERY (ed.), *Vatican II: The Church Constitution*, Scepter, Dublin 1966, 31.

⁶⁵ J. L. WITTE, *La Chiesa "sacramentum unitatis"*, 495.

4. Catholicity as Recapitulation of the Whole Humanity

The Council states that, “This character of universality which adorns the people of God is a gift from the Lord himself whereby the Catholic ceaselessly and efficaciously seeks for the return of all humanity and all its goods under Christ the head in the unity of his Spirit” (*LG* 13/2). By means of catholicity the Church extends Christ’s act of recapitulation of the entire world. It is already said that, “All men are called to belong to the new people of God” (*LG* 13/1). The same thought is repeated, saying that, “All men are called to be part of this catholic unity of the people of God which prefigures and promotes universal peace” (*LG* 13/5). This vocation establishes a relationship with the Church which is absolutely universal; that is, ‘all’ means each and every one is ‘called’ without any exception. We should also consider in what consists such a call and how it can be affirmed that each person receives such a call. W. Löser, referring to *Lumen gentium* comments that the catholicity of the Church is proved by the fact that all nations are called to join the people of God and all human beings belong to the Church, even in different ways⁶⁶.

The notion of the universality of the people of God, and particularly the

assumption of God’s universal saving will for all humanity, does raise the question of the role and necessity of the Church to bring about this salvation and to the various degrees of relationship or membership to the Church. One can also ask, is it exactly the same ‘being called to salvation’ and ‘being called to belong to the people of God’? Holding up the concept of such a universal call to salvation *Lumen gentium* goes on to distinguish the various ways in which people either belong to or are related to the Church. Thus we can make out three categories of people: Catholics (*LG* 14), other Christians (*LG* 15) and all other people (*LG* 16).

The question remains is how these various categories of people are “related to the Church”? The doctrine is that *all* are included in the salvific plan of God. The Council clarifies it in various ways. “The plan of salvation includes those who acknowledge the Creator ... [God] as the Saviour wills *all* men to be saved” (*LG* 16). And the Council goes further to teach that whatever good or truth is found among these people is considered by the Church as a preparation for the Gospel⁶⁷. According to M. Midali, “All that is genuine and authentic, all that is noble and honest, all that is true and just, all that is beneficial that can be elevated to religious, moral and

⁶⁶ Cf. W. LÖSER, *Catholicity of the Church*, in W. BEINERT – F. S. FIORENZA (eds.), *Handbook of Catholic Theology*, The Crossroad Publishing Company, New York 1995, 54. It should be noted that the *LG* text uses the word ‘belong’ in a strict sense to denote the status of the baptized faithful, while for the rest it uses the expression ‘related to’.

⁶⁷ Cf. *LG* 16.

spiritual level, found in whichever person or people and religious confession, is an orientation towards Christ, towards the people of God and constitutes more or less an immediate preparation to the Gospel”⁶⁸.

So the Church must never renounce to evangelize the non-Christian world. With the power of the Holy Spirit, the Church invites all the people to the fullness of truth. Catholicity demands the Church to continue her efforts to bring the message of the Gospel to those who have not yet received it.

5. Assuming People, Culture and Temporal Values – Catholicity in Act

Recapitulation of everything in Christ is at work in the ‘extensive’ aspect of catholicity: the Church’s reaching out to all races, nationalities and cultures. The catholicity of the Church is both transcendent and immanent: it is transcendent because the Church is not got exhausted in any people or culture or race, instead she overcomes all of them. It is immanent since she can be really inserted in all the peoples of the universe and can assume the temporal welfare of any people which are authentic and genuine. R. Gaillardetz remarks that the affirmation of the goodness of diverse cultures in many

of the magisterial statements of twentieth century was the point of departure for the Vatican II’s exploration of the nature and scope of the Church’s catholicity⁶⁹.

5.1. The Church Assumes All Races and Cultures of Humanity

The Church is also destined to develop and perfect the reality of grace that is already present in the cultures where she engages. In speaking of the elements which comprise the cultural heritage of each people, the Council uses twice the Latin word *assumere*. “Since the kingdom of Christ is not of this world (cf. Jn 18:36), the Church or people of God which establishes this kingdom does not take away anything from the temporal welfare of any people. Rather she fosters and *takes to herself*, in so far as they are good, the abilities, the resources and customs of peoples. In so *taking them to herself* she purifies, strengthens, and elevates them” (LG 13/2)⁷⁰.

The Constitution wants to emphasize the inclusive and integrate character of the Church, the sacrament of unity of the whole world. That means she must always be opened towards the world, without being assimilated to it, and remains as the unique Church of Christ, faithful to God

⁶⁸ Cf. M. MIDALI, *Il popolo di Dio*, in FAVALE A. (a cura di), *La costituzione dogmatica sulla Chiesa*, Elledici, Torino 1965, 477.

⁶⁹ Cf. R. GAILLARDETZ, *Ecclesiology for a Global Church: A People Called and Sent*, Orbis Books, New York 2008, 48-49.

⁷⁰ Italics are ours. Any type of discrimination based on caste, creed, race, culture and social status or religion hampers the Church being catholic. Cf. NA 5.

and to his Son incarnated. In fact it is declared that all the richness of different countries, their religious thoughts such as the rites and their culture, can be received by the Church of Christ, provided that they are purified and elevated to Christian level. U. Casale remarks that, "In this way the Church becomes 'catholic' in respect to the quality of the *subject*, as individuals and collective persons, called to enter the people of God"⁷¹.

The Church realizes her catholicity also by inserting herself in every culture, permitting herself to be assumed into that culture, and not simply 'taking to herself' all that is found there. Inculcation is a process that can be defined as "incarnation with a view to redemption"⁷². Like the Divine Word who emptied himself, being born in the likeness of men to recover and to re-establish the humanity, the Church must be 'incarnated' in every culture so that to be able to recover and re-establish whatever in the new culture needs redemption⁷³. In this way the Church introduces an elevated style of life to the humanity which then leads it to salvation.

In this process the local Churches have a crucial role to make incarnate the universal Church in the human society. The

Council remarks that, "[The young Churches] borrow from the customs, traditions, wisdom, teaching, arts and sciences of their people everything which could be used to praise the glory of the Creator, manifest the grace of the saviour, or contribute to the right ordering of Christian life" (AG 22). The more the particular Churches be inculcated, the more catholic the universal Church will be, on condition that in the process of inculcation the essential bonds of communion are not weakened⁷⁴.

5.2. Assuming the Temporal Goods

The Church's universal redeeming mission makes her to accept and assume to herself all the created reality. The Church accepts the immense richness of the created and temporal goods that the humanity possesses in order to purify, sanctify and elevate them to a divine sphere⁷⁵.

Between the two extremes of creation and eschatology the Church appears as a primary sign of sanctification which without destroying anything, completes everything that she assumes and transfigures. Catholicity absorbs and assumes the particular forms in all its positivity⁷⁶. Such a spiritual integration of the values and temporal goods possesses the

⁷¹ U. CASALE, *Il mistero della Chiesa: saggio di ecclesiologia*, Elledici, Torino 1998, 265.

⁷² F. SULLIVAN, *The Church We Believe In*, 93.

⁷³ Cf. LG 8/3.

⁷⁴ Cf. F. SULLIVAN, *The Church We Believe In*, 93. See also LG 13/3.

⁷⁵ Cf. LG 17.

⁷⁶ Cf. Y. CONGAR, *Die Wesenseigenschaften der Kirche*, 498-499.

form of a dynamic catholicity of recapitulation which is not fully visible. M. Midali insists that, "It is clear, in fact, in accepting to herself the cultural heritage, forms of thought and costumes that the environment provides and at times imposed on her, must peel off error and evil, must be purified of all that is not compatible with the essential requirements of her religious and moral life, must ennable and enlivened as far as they are valid and authentic. Even from this point of view the assumption by the Church of the whole human reality, as long as real and honest, is not an ordinary or general assumption, but according to clearly defined and unmistakable criterion"⁷⁷. Thus, we read in the Constitution, "[The Church] strives constantly and with due effect to bring *all* humanity and *all* its possessions back to its source in Christ, with him as its head and united in his Spirit" (*LG* 13/2)⁷⁸.

The Council, thus, treating the Church's relationship to the world, sought to keep an uneasy tension between affirming legitimate human endeavors and insisting on the world's need for

transformation. For this the Church herself represents as the instrument to make possible the unity. This unity is defined as one made up of many various parts, a diversity due to the great variety of 'ranks', 'duties' and conditions or states of life among the members of the visible community⁷⁹. Here we are arriving at a basic concept of *communion* which holds up the structure of the Church, maintains her unity, shapes her growth and animates her life. U. Casale sustains that, "The catholic principle 'according to the whole', is a principle of *communion*, not that of uniformity"⁸⁰. What it is meant is not uniformity, but a communion where everyone remains as one is and brings what one has⁸¹.

6. Communion as Manifestation of Catholicity

Generally speaking, ecclesiology of communion is the fundamental and central idea of the documents of the Vatican II⁸². The thirteenth article which specifies catholicity, gives a noteworthy position to the notion of communion. Thus we read,

⁷⁷ M. MIDALI, *Il popolo di Dio*, 444. In different documents the Council exhorts all to acknowledge, preserve and promote the spiritual and moral goods found in the culture where she engages. For example, see *LG* 17; *GS* 42/4; *SC* 37; *AG* 9/2, 18/2, 22/1; *NA* 2/2; etc.

⁷⁸ Italics are ours.

⁷⁹ Cf. J. MARKEY, *Creating Communion*, 64-65.

⁸⁰ U. CASALE, *Il mistero della Chiesa*, 265.

⁸¹ Cf. *LG* 13/3. See also *UR* 4, 16, 17; *OE* 2. This point gives a vast access to the theology of local Churches.

⁸² Cf. SYNOD OF BISHOPS, Final Report, *The Church, in the Word of God, Celebrates the Mystery of Christ for the Salvation of the World*, 07.12.1985, II, C, 1; CDF, *Communionis notio: Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion*, 28.05.1992, 1.

“All the faithful scattered throughout the world are in communion with each other in the Holy Spirit” (*LG* 13/2). Communion manifests the catholic unity of the people of God.

6.1. Communion of the Catholic Faithful

First of all communion among the catholic faithful is an expression of the catholicity of the Church. A. Grillmeier writes, “The one people of God is found dwelling among all the nations of the earth, the faithful, however, remaining in fellowship, in *communion*, with each other, with all the Spirit-given fullness which is proper to the people of God”⁸³.

Christ mystically constitutes as his body those who are called together from every nation. Diversity of members and functions become part of the building up of this body⁸⁴. Therefore the people of God is an assembly of various peoples, but made up of different ranks by reason of their duties or due to their condition and manner of life in the Church⁸⁵. It can be called the catholicity of the structure in the Church. The Constitution discusses it widely in terms of the actual distinction between holders of office and the laity,

between religious and Christians in the world in the third and fourth chapters. This does not mean that there are various social levels in the Church, rather by means of her catholicity which embraces the diversity and co-ordination of different states of life, the Church has room for all callings and ways of life⁸⁶. Here the Council is speaking about the people who are “fully incorporated” (*LG* 14/2) into the Church. They are united together by the bonds constituted by the profession of faith, sacraments and ecclesial government⁸⁷. The communion of the faithful is both signified and brought about by the wonderful sacrament of the Eucharist⁸⁸.

6.2. Catholicity as Unity in Diversity

In the commentary to the second chapter of *Lumen gentium* A. Grillmeier writes, “Catholicity as understood by the Constitution is a union of opposites. The people of God represents one pole, in its unity and unicity, but also in its being graced by the Spirit. The other pole is formed by the multiplicity of the peoples of the earth, with their various customs, talents and energies, which are to be preserved for them insofar as they are genuine values and used to bring into the

⁸³ A. GRILLMEIER, *Commentary on Lumen gentium* in VORGRIMLER H. (ed.), *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, vol. 1, Burns & Oates /Herder and Herder, London 1969³, 167.

⁸⁴ Cf. *LG* 7.

⁸⁵ Cf. *LG* 13/3.

⁸⁶ Cf. A. GRILLMEIER, *Commentary on Lumen gentium*, 168.

⁸⁷ Cf. *LG* 14/2; *UR* 2/2.

⁸⁸ Cf. *LG* 3, 7/2; *UR* 2/1.

family of Christ all those who are called to the one people of God”⁸⁹. The third section of *Lumen gentium* 13 speaks of the interior diversity of the Church in proportion to the variety ways of life in the Church, and the variety of particular Churches. In the Constitution we read, “The people of God is not only an assembly of various peoples, but in itself is made up of different ranks” (*LG* 13/3).

In the same paragraph the Council speaks of the different traditions proper to particular Churches and the legitimate differences between them. The diversity of traditions of the particular Churches is an aspect of the Church’s catholicity⁹⁰. The Council mentions that, “Holding a rightful place in the communion of the Church there are also particular Churches that retain their own traditions, without prejudice to the Chair of Peter which presides over the whole assembly of charity, and protects their legitimate variety while at the same time taking care that these differences do not hinder unity, but rather contribute to it” (*LG* 13/3).

M. Midali comments that, “Catholicity of the Church rejects uniformity and admits diversity and legitimate variety”⁹¹. Later in the same document the Council repeats that, “This variety of local Churches with one common aspiration is splendid evidence of the catholicity of the undivided Church” (*LG* 23/4).

It is the mission of the Episcopal College to edify this complex unity of catholicity. The Council says, “This college, in so far as it is composed of many members, is the expression of the multifariousness and universality of the people of God; and of the unity of the flock of Christ, in so far as it is assembled under one head” (*LG* 22/2). It is in virtue of catholicity that the Churches contribute their own gifts to other parts and to the whole Church, so that the whole and each of the parts are strengthened by the common sharing of all things and by the common effort to attain fullness in unity⁹². Unity and diversity are the twin sources of

⁸⁹ A. GRILLMEIER, *Commentary on Lumen gentium*, 167.

⁹⁰ It seems that in the thirteenth paragraph the term particular Church is used to denote larger groupings such as eastern Churches or others that share a particular tradition or culture. Cf. F. SULLIVAN, *The Church We Believe In*, 94.

⁹¹ M. MIDALI, *Il popolo di Dio*, 446.

⁹² Cf. *LG* 13/3.

this fullness⁹³. In order to protect and defend both unity and diversity the Church has the ministries of episcopacy and papacy⁹⁴.

6.3. Catholicity and Ecumenism

The communion aspect of catholicity draws us closer to the ecumenical aspect of catholicity articulated by the Council. The Vatican II underlines that by the gift of catholicity the Church ceaselessly and efficaciously seeks for the return of all humanity to the unity of Christ⁹⁵. From this preliminary statement we can draw out some important conclusions for ecumenism. How it works is clarified by the Council. “Between all the various parts of the Church there is a bond of close communion whereby spiritual riches,

apostolic workers and temporal resources are shared. For the members of the people of God are called upon to share their goods, and the words of the apostle apply also to each of the Churches, ‘according to the gift that each has received, administer it to one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God’ (1 Pet 5:10)” (LG 13/3)⁹⁶.

R. Repole mentions that the thirteenth article should be read in the light of the eighth article where the Church overcomes the rigid exclusive identification of the Roman Catholic Church with the Church of Christ⁹⁷. In LG 8/2 we read that, “This is the one Church of Christ which in the Creed is professed as one, holy, catholic and apostolic, which our Saviour, after his

⁹³ Note that in the article thirteen, the first paragraph emphasizes unity and the third diversity. Years before the Council Y. Congar had remarked that the principle and model of the unity of the Church is founded on the unity of the undivided Trinity. The Church’s catholicity is her capacity to unite with God all human beings and every human value. This capacity, which has a Trinitarian and Christological foundations, expresses the relation between the unity and diversity. Though it depends on the visible plane a unity and uniqueness in the measure in which interior unity must have institutional and organic expression, it also demands, for the vital increase of that unity, appropriate adaptation to the multiform humanity in which the Church’s unity is expressed. Cf. Y. CONGAR, *Divided Christendom: A Catholic Study of the Problem of Reunion*, The Centenary Press, London 1939, 48, 66-89.

⁹⁴ The Council mentions the role of the Pope as protector of ‘traditions’. Cf. LG 13/3.

⁹⁵ Cf. LG 13/2.

⁹⁶ The Council has already declared that many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside the visible confines of the Church. And these gifts belong to the Church of Christ help her to move towards Catholic unity. See LG 8/2. We read also in UR 17/2 that, “The entire heritage of spirituality and liturgy, of discipline and theology in the various traditions belongs to the full catholic and apostolic character of the Church”.

⁹⁷ Cf. R. REPOLE, *Cattolicità in CALABRESE G. – GOYRET P. – PIAZZA O. F. (a cura di), Dizionario di ecclesiologia*, Città Nuova, Roma 2010, 142.

Resurrection, commissioned Peter to shepherd, and him and the other apostles to extend and direct with authority, which he erected for all ages as 'the pillar and mainstay of the truth'. This Church constituted and organized in the world as a society, subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in communion with him, although many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside of its visible structure. These elements, as gifts belonging to the Church

of Christ, are forces impelling toward catholic unity"⁹⁸. In M. Midali's opinion the concept of catholic unity authoritatively sanctioned in *Lumen gentium* can have great resonances in the ecumenical field⁹⁹.

The affirmation of the Council that, "The divisions among Christians prevent the Church from realizing the fullness of catholicity proper to her" (*UR* 4/10)¹⁰⁰ should be read in reference to the thirteenth article. One of the reasons for this declaration is that the rich tradition of the

⁹⁸ The CDF explains that, "With the expression *subsistit in*, the Second Vatican Council sought to harmonize two doctrinal statements: on the one hand, that the Church of Christ, despite the divisions which exist among Christians, continues to exist fully only in the Catholic Church, and on the other hand, that 'outside her structure, many elements can be found of sanctification and truth', that is, in those Churches and ecclesial communities which are not yet in full communion with the Catholic Church". CDF, *Dominus Iesus: On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church*, 16/3. The CDF once more affirmed the teaching of the Council stating that, "In number 8 of the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium* 'subsistence' means this perduring, historical continuity and the permanence of all the elements instituted by Christ in the Catholic Church, in which the Church of Christ is concretely found on this earth. It is possible, according to Catholic doctrine, to affirm correctly that the Church of Christ is present and operative in the churches and ecclesial Communities not yet fully in communion with the Catholic Church, on account of the elements of sanctification and truth that are present in them. Nevertheless, the word 'subsists' can only be attributed to the Catholic Church alone precisely because it refers to the mark of unity that we profess in the symbols of the faith (I believe... in the 'one' Church); and this 'one' Church subsists in the Catholic Church". CDF, *Responses to Some Questions Regarding Certain Aspects of the Doctrine on the Church*, 29.06.2007, in www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20070629_responsa-quaestiones_en.

⁹⁹ Cf. M. MIDALI, *Il popolo di Dio*, 447-448.

¹⁰⁰ See also *CN*, 17/3; CDF, *Dominus Iesus*, 17/4.

separated Churches of the East also belongs to the catholicity of the one Church¹⁰¹. The Council finds that the differences in spiritual traditions, discipline, legitimate theological expressions of doctrine, etc. are manifestations of the rich varieties that belong to the catholicity of the Church¹⁰². Therefore the mission of the Church to re-establish the unity of the divided Christendom remains as an unfinished task for the full realization of her catholicity in its historical dimension.

As far as we have seen it is evident that the catholicity to be carried out, deals with, by faith, restoring the kingdom of Christ in the world. It refers to the widening of the Church to the extent that all that which in man must be brought back under Christ as the head; renewed and saved by him. It signifies the realization in Christ and by means of his Spirit the unity of human nature, realization of a unique nature hypostatized in multiplicity of persons, as the divine nature is in three Persons¹⁰³. Thus the Church which is the *new* people of God, the universal sacrament of salvation binds the entire people of God

to a “catholic-universal” opening (in the very sense of the thirteenth article) and consequently to the mission. G. Colzani points out that, “The ecclesiological renewal had succeeded to overcome fully the theory of a quantitative catholicity, seeing it rather as the property of a Church, who receives to herself all men and the whole human race. In this line the missions became indispensable means to obtain the essence of the Church. Without them the Christian community would have given up its catholicity, since it is the mission which concretely expresses this tension”¹⁰⁴.

7. Mission of the Church as an Expression of Catholicity

In the progressive development of our analysis on the catholicity of the Church explained by the Vatican II, we have seen that in the eternal plan of God concerning the salvation of humanity, God wanted the Church to be the sacrament, point of convergence and centre of the economy of salvation. Having considered the various aspects of catholicity it is clear that catholicity of the Church is expressed and

¹⁰¹ Cf. *UR* 4/7. It is noted that in *UR* 4 the mark catholic is not attributed to the non Catholics; but also the expression of catholicity is diminished in the same Catholic Church. Here arises a question that whether the text understands catholicity in a supplementary mode or in an intensive mode. Even though the text does not respond directly it seems that from the entire context and also from the other parallel texts of the Council, catholicity is understood as the diversity of the various gifts of God gathered in unity, which means as an integrative unity. Cf. E. LANNE, *Cattolicità*, 700.

¹⁰² See also *UR* 15/5, 16, 17/1; *GS* 92.

¹⁰³ Cf. Y. CONGAR, *Die Wesenseigenschaften der Kirche*, 499.

¹⁰⁴ G. COLZANI, *La missionarietà della Chiesa: saggio storico sull'epoca moderna fino al Vaticano II*, EDB, Bologna 1975, 104.

manifested in her mission to the whole humanity. Being a seed of universal destination, the Church could comprehend and express her nature and catholicity only in the measure in which she enters in contact with and in communion with the entire human family¹⁰⁵. Therefore the mission appears to be an essential factor of the manifestation of the Church's catholicity, since she is missionary by nature¹⁰⁶.

7.1. The Basis of the Church's Mission

The Church's mission is the continuation of the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit, and so one can call it a vital participation, in the form of ministerial association, in the Holy Trinity's activity in human history¹⁰⁷. P. Rossano states that, "The mission of the Church does not depend only on the mandate received in the beginning but streams out perpetually from her participation in the love of God that is communicated to the Church in order to be spread to the whole humanity"¹⁰⁸.

Consequently, as the Father sent the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Son sent the apostles who are filled with the Holy Spirit to preach, to sanctify and to govern; and the Church is entrusted to continue this mission. It is the reason of her existence. This task is not limited either by time or by space.

Lumen gentium offers the following principles regarding the mission of the Church. The seventeenth article of the second chapter integrates the mission of the Church at the very heart of the Council's ecclesial vision. The immediate cause of the mission is the missionary command that Jesus gave to his disciples and also the words of Jesus to his apostles documented in the first pages of the Acts¹⁰⁹. All these are resumed by the Council for the elaboration of the text on the missionary activity of the Church. They are, the solemn missionary mandate, on the basis of which the mission of Christ transmitted to the apostles is given to the Church; the immanent aims of the missionary action,

¹⁰⁵ Cf. P. ROSSANO, *Theologie der Mission*, in J. FEINER – M. LÖHRER (Hrsg.), *Mysterium Salutis. Grundriss Heilsgeschichtlicher Dogmatik: das Heilsgeschehen in der Gemeinde*, Bd. IV/I, 503.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. LG 48; AG 2.

¹⁰⁷ The Constitution speaks about the mission of the Church in the seventeenth article. The different sections of the article should be read in light of the entire Constitution. Losing sight of their ongoing relationship with the other affirmations of *Lumen gentium* may lead to serious misinterpretations. For example, our text does not say anything about the relations of the Trinitarian mystery with mission because the missionary vocation of the people of God cannot be explained fully if not in the mystery, and the way it has been described in the chapter "The Mystery of the Church". Cf. M. -J. GUILLOU, *La vocazione missionaria della Chiesa*, in G. BARAÚNA (a cura di), *La Chiesa del Vaticano II*, 680.

¹⁰⁸ P. ROSSANO, *Theologie der Mission*, 511.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Mt 28:19-20; Acts 1:8.

which are evangelization, adoption of religious and cultural forms of people and establishing new local Churches; and the obligation of each faithful to participate in the missionary activity of the Church, that impends to every faithful and in a special way to the hierarchy. It is also particularly significant the fact that the Constitution underlines the Eucharistic foundation of the mission with regard to the complete edification of the body of Christ¹¹⁰.

7.2. Universality of the Mission of the Church

The Council recalls that the universality of the mission of the Church, which “strives ever to proclaim the Gospel to all men”, is based on Christ’s specific mandate and on the “inner necessity of her own catholicity” (AG 1). The universality of the mission entered into the hearts of the disciples with the gift of the Holy Spirit¹¹¹. Thus the universal openness of the Church is not an external characteristic

imposed upon her, but an expression of a property that belongs to her very essence. The Church is ‘catholic’, “the universal sacrament of salvation” (LG 48), because by the power of the Holy Spirit the kingdom of God is anticipated in her¹¹².

The universality of Church’s mission has a Trinitarian dimension¹¹³. The Church is emerged from the Father’s universal heart, and she is catholic because the Father extends his fatherhood to all humanity¹¹⁴. The universality of the Father’s eternal plan shines forth concretely in the messianic work of his Son made man¹¹⁵. This universality which proceeds from the Father and through the incarnate Son was definitely transmitted to the Church on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit filled the first Christian community and made it universal. It is evident when the people of different nations understood the preaching of St Peter in each one’s native language (cf. Acts 2:7-8). From that day on,

¹¹⁰ Cf. LG 17.

¹¹¹ Cf. Acts 1:8.

¹¹² Cf. JOHN PAUL II, General Audience, *La missione universale della Chiesa*, 05.04.1995, in *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, XVIII, 1, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano 1997, 925.

¹¹³ The ‘missio de Trinitate’, which closely binds the missionary awareness of the Church to the missions of the Divine Persons, is the most precise theological foundation of the ‘universality’ of the mission. The Trinitarian dimension of the mission is declared by the Vatican II and the idea is reaffirmed by Pope John Paul II on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the conclusion of the Council in his encyclical letter *Redemptoris missio*. Cf. RM 1. See also AG 2-4.

¹¹⁴ Cf. RM 12.

¹¹⁵ In Jesus’ preaching this mysterious gift is designated by the appellative “kingdom of God”. There is no doubt that this kingdom has a universal destination. See the parables of mustard seed in Mt 13:31 and of leaven in Mt 13:33.

the Church with the power of Holy Spirit acted incisively “in Jerusalem, in the whole of Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8)¹¹⁶. Thus the Church’s universal mission does not rise from below but descends from above, from the Holy Spirit, as if imbued with the universality of Trinitarian love. Pope John Paul II affirms it, teaching that, “The Trinitarian mystery, through the mystery of the Redemption, by the influence of the Holy Spirit, communicates to the Church the property of universalism”¹¹⁷.

7.3. The Aim and Objectives of Mission

The Council in two parallel passages (*LG* 17 and *AG* 9) sketches out the basic purpose of the mission: collaboration of the Church with God for the full realization of his plan of salvation in history, which involves proclamation of the salvific Truth that she received, the removal of sin, purification, elevation and improvement of all human possibilities, so that the Church incorporates all into Christ for the glory of God and happiness of man. Comments P. Rossano, “If the Church is missionary by nature, the aim of the mission significantly coincides with the Church’s

existence in the world, and if the mission has its roots in the continuation of Christ’s mission in the history, its goals are to be identified with the purpose of coming of the Word among men”¹¹⁸. Christ who is the source of salvation for the whole world is communicated by the ministry of the Church to those who enter into communion with him to form the one body of Christ. P. Rossano states that, “The mystery of incarnation and the sacramentality of the Church seem to suggest that the grace of God, which really wants the salvation of men, tends to incarnate itself, to express itself outwardly and thus because of its nature to express in the catholicity of the Church the big family of the sons of God”¹¹⁹.

Hence in the seventeenth article the Council declares that the Church is capable of and does the task of evangelization by adapting herself to the mentality, customs, forms of thought and life of the peoples to be evangelized, and also by taking up to her all the material and moral values, religious, cultural and artistic prerogatives of non-Christian faiths and different ethnic groups, on condition that they are purified, strengthened and elevated¹²⁰. The

¹¹⁶ The whole book of the Acts of the Apostles is filled up with a universalistic tension that leads the Church; on one side to break the barriers of Jewish observances, and on the other side to widen out and to root in the entire known world. The same thing is also evident in some of the letters of St Paul. See, for example 1 Thess 1:8; Rom 1:8.

¹¹⁷ JOHN PAUL II, *La missione universale della Chiesa*, 927.

¹¹⁸ P. ROSSANO, *Theologie der Mission*, 521.

¹¹⁹ P. ROSSANO, *Theologie der Mission*, 527.

¹²⁰ See also *LG* 13/2; O. KARRER, *Il principio di sussidiarietà nella Chiesa*, 612.

application of these principles in the missionary apostolate will foster an evangelization more universal and more catholic, and should result in the edification of new local Churches. Writes M. Midali, "The missionary activity must seek the evangelization of individual men and elevation and sanctification of their rituals and culture, but incorporating them into the fabric and community life of a local Church"¹²¹.

7.4. A People Called to the Eschatological Fullness

At the end of the seventeenth paragraph the missionary tension of the entire people of God towards the eschatological fullness is affirmed. "The Church both prays and labours in order that the entire world may become the people of God, the body of the Lord and the Temple of the Holy Spirit, and that in Christ, the head of all, all honour and glory may be rendered to the Creator and Father of the universe".

Here it is clear that there is a relationship between evangelization of the world and realization the kingdom of God. *Lumen gentium* analyses the different steps of missionary activities in this eschatological perspective. The Church prepares those people intend to believe her and to confess the faith; she prepares them

for baptism, snatches them from the slavery of error and incorporates them into Christ; so that they grow in him through the charity as long as the *fullness* is reached¹²². The incorporation to Christ initiated by means of the faith and then with baptism, is deepened in the Eucharist¹²³. The Church through the Eucharist is not closed on herself; but on the contrary she opens toward the call to a life under the motion of the Spirit, that makes to radiate everywhere the influence of the mystery of Christ and also the assumption of all human values. To this point the mission is somehow interior to the Eucharist. It cannot be understood that the Eucharist is a part of the Church already made and the Gospel belongs to part of the mission. Eucharist and the Gospel are indissolubly united. In the very heart of the Eucharistic celebration, in the union with Christ, her invisible and glorified head, the Church realizes every day the profundity of missionary appeal. She discovers that her glorified head, Christ lives devoid of the visible incorporation of a big number of members, and she hopes for to work for the growth of Christ in the humanity, assuming all that is of the man. The paragraph 13 of *LG* has already underlined the legitimate diversity, in the internal communion of the Church, of the particular Churches that use their proper traditions, under the direction of the

¹²¹ M. MIDALI, *Il mistero della Chiesa*, in FAVALE A. (a cura di), *La costituzione dogmatica sulla Chiesa*, 487.

¹²² Cf. *LG* 17.

¹²³ Cf. *LG* 11.

Cathedra of St Peter, which presides the universal union of charity. This desire of catholicity, understood as the variety of gifts, is one of the traditional data of the revelation and of the true missionary attitude. C. O'NEILL comments that, "The Church is marked by this duality of tension between future, unattained perfection and the present participation in that perfection"¹²⁴.

8. Catholicity as a Gift and a Task

The internal articulation of catholicity according to *Lumen gentium* suggests that the catholicity which is proper to the Church is a gift from the Lord. "This characteristic of universality which adorns the people of God is a gift from the Lord himself" (*LG* 13/2).

E. Malnati comments that, "It is not something that comes 'from outside', but is intrinsic, that is ontologically linked to the identity of the people of God"¹²⁵. The external articulation of catholicity would affirm that this gift is to be met in time and space. The Constitution considers catholicity not simply as an apologetical note but rather treats it dogmatically; considering it as a gift given and at the same time as a task to be realized. The Church was catholic at the very moment of her earthly appearance, on the day of the Pentecost. At the same time catholicity is still an unfinished task. She constantly

strives to actualize this gift. F. Sullivan writes, "Catholicity is a gift to the Church but it is also a mandate: 'to strive energetically and constantly to bring all of humanity under Christ as its head'"¹²⁶. Mission becomes an unavoidable factor in the full realization of the catholicity of the Church. The Council reminds us that, "Destined to extend to all regions of the earth, she [the Church] enters into human history, though she transcends at once all times and all racial boundaries. Advancing through trials and tribulations, the Church is strengthened by God's grace" (*LG* 9/4).

Here she has to overcome many obstacles especially the divisions among the Christians which prevent the Church from carrying out the fullness of catholicity proper to her. The Church has to protect and make her children (already baptized) grow in the faith and at the same time she must also make efforts to evangelize those who have not yet heard the Gospel.

9. Conclusion

Passing through the traditional theological treatises of catholicity, we see that the Church is bestowed with an internal or *intensive* catholicity and external or *extensive* catholicity. The Vatican II builds up the Church's life in the mystery of *communion* flowing from the Trinity to the Trinity as its goal. The doctrine of catholicity according to the Council's

¹²⁴ C. O'NEILL, *The Mystery of the Church*, 36.

¹²⁵ E. MALNATI, *La Chiesa: sviluppo storico dell'ecclesiologia*, 215.

¹²⁶ F. SULLIVAN, *The Church We Believe In*, 131.

teachings leads us to the conclusion that the Holy Trinity is the fundamental basis of catholicity. The Constitution establishes a clear principle that before being a property that brings to the exterior of the Church, catholicity is a principle that regulates the internal life of the Church. She is already catholic from the very moment that Christ and the Holy Spirit projected her towards a mission without any geographic, racial or cultural limits. Thus she reunites the scattered people of God under the unique shepherd, Christ. Acknowledging the fact that the Church at times appears as a 'little flock', the Council asserted that Christ continues to use her as an instrument for the salvation of all. That means all the means necessary for the salvation is present in her. In other words she is adorned with the totality of truth. Consequently the indispensable role that she has regarding the salvation of world is asserted.

The Church is catholic in an extensive sense because she is destined to the whole world and for the entire humanity, and in such a way she is not subjected to any political, cultural and racial barriers. All are called to be part of this catholic unity of the people of God. The Council does not speak of uniformity but of unity, not of conformity but of community. The Church is able to hold everyone and everything in *communion*. The Council goes on to assert that all human beings, including those to whom the Gospel has not yet been preached are ordained/related

to the Church of Christ. It is certain that the extension of the Church to the whole world will constitute the external confirm of such a bursting tension towards universality.

The Council emphasises the significant role of missionary activity for the realization of catholicity in the extensive sense. The universality of extension among the whole mankind is promised in the prophetic announcements¹²⁷. It is assigned to the Church as a task by the risen Christ¹²⁸. Evidently it remains always to be carried out since the humanity is growing as the world itself. So the actualization of the missionary command of Christ is seen both as an expression and intensification of the Church's catholicity and it cannot be realized if not through the apostolicity of the Church. Here the role of the particular Churches is highly emphasised by the Council.

Like the other marks of the Church, the catholicity is also to be taken in a dynamic sense, because in part it is a realized reality but at the same time not yet manifested fully. The Council acknowledges the limitations, especially the inner dividedness of Christianity for the full realization of catholicity. The Church has still much more to learn and reveal about herself by growing organically through the assimilation of all the marvelous wealth and variety of human values she has not yet incorporated.

¹²⁷ Cf. Gen 22:18, 26:4, 28:14; Is 2:2, 54:1-3; Mic 4:1; Zech 8:20-22; Ps 2:7-8, 72:8; etc.

¹²⁸ Cf. Mt 28:18-20; Mk 16:15-18; Lk 24:44-49; Acts 1:8.

News

The Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church together with the members of the Permanent Synod paid a visit to His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI on... They also met the officials of the various dicasteries.

A meeting of the Joint International Theological Commission for Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Malankara Syrian Orthodox and the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Churches was held at Spirituality Centre, Manganam, Kottayam, from 7 to 9 December 2011. The commission proposed an agreement between the Catholic Church and the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church on the sharing of sacred places as well as Sacraments of Penance, Eucharist and Anointing of the Sick for grave spiritual need. An agreement is already in place between the Catholic Church and the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church on mixed marriage. The proposed agreement between the Catholic Church and the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church is only with regard to the sharing of sacred places like churches and cemeteries.

St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Vadavathoor, Kottayam, celebrates its Golden Jubilee in 2012. The Grand Finale of the celebrations will be on 14 January 2012. The celebration will be blessed with the presence of His Eminence Leonardo Cardinal Sandri, Prefect of the Congregations for the Oriental Churches, Major Archbishops of the Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara Churches, Bishops from the Syro-Malabar, Syro-Malankara and Latin Churches. Ministers of State Government including the Chief Minister of Kerala and Members of Parliament will be present on the occasion.

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